





THE STORY OF A PARISH

by
ALFRED CIABURRI



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"I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of thy house; and the place where thy glory dwelleth."

—PSALM 25, VER. 8

Dedication

W

Oo WRITE the history of a parish is to write the history of a people at their best—as they render service, sacrifice, homage and love to their Divine Creator.

Therefore, it is to the people of the Assumption parish that this book is sincerely dedicated—from that small band who comprised the first congregation to the thousands who are now the parish unit... To their loved ones who have gone from this earth and whose memories are cherished... To the sisters, Maestre Pie Filippini... To the first pastor... To the self-sacrificing curates... and, in particular, to the Rev. Dominic J. Del Monte, beloved pastor, to whom all turn for spiritual guidance.

It is our hope that having known and loved and served God well in this world as good parishioners, we may find eternal happiness with Him in the next.



Introduction



HEN several of our parishioners suggested that a permanent record be made of the church history, I welcomed the idea with enthusiasm. And I thought immediately of the interest and tremendous benefits to our people were we to present them with a story of the parish—which is essentially the story of their own spiritual and material development.

This book, then, is the result of that suggestion, and it is presented to commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of Our Lady of Assumption Church in Bayonne.

Fortunately, many of the men and women who helped to build this parish—and who remember the early days of struggle and sacrifice—are still with us. We owe them a debt of gratitude for their pioneering spirit and their faith, the vision and the dreams which are now being fully realized.

Fortunately, too, the sons and daughters of the first Italian settlers in Bayonne and all those who followed, have continued in the good work—adding immeasurably to the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Assumption parish. To them—too numerous to mention here by name—we also express our thanks and gratitude.

Above all, our remembrance and our prayers go to the departed souls—the parish members who have been called to their heavenly reward.

This book is an expression of the growth and progress of the Italian people here, and we sincerely hope it may serve as an inspiration to the young of the parish for future deeds, rich in full spiritual values.

In its finest sense, this book is like to the candle of which St. Matthew speaks:

"Even so let your light shine before men, in order that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

It is in this spirit, primarily, that this book is presented.

Sov. Dominic J. Del monte

Pastor

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The Beginning



CHAPTER I

The Beginning



HERE are those who remember the birth of a parish which, from an humble beginning, is today a magnificent monument of man to his God.

There are those who remember that cold December day of 1902 when an immigrant priest who had been assigned to the Peninsula City seven months before, saw part of his dream fulfilled in the dedication of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Old timers whose memories are not dimmed, even by the weight of years, will describe in vivid tones the cornerstone blessing of the wooden church on that bitter winter afternoon.

Old timers will tell you that close to 1,000 persons, practically the entire population of Italian origin, attended the dedication.

They will describe for you the sacrifices and heartaches that made the ceremony possible, and the seven months of faith and perseverance in the face of obstacles and discouragement.

The Days Ahead

There was something noble and inspiring on that day, something that made both the pastor and his flock hope for more accomplishments in the days ahead.

The accomplishments took shape, gradually, year after year—the accomplishments which, today, are a source of pride, as well as an inspiration for renewed efforts.

This fiftieth anniversary celebration brings to mind the entire history of the Italian parish in Bayonne which grew from 500 souls to an estimated 13,000 persons of Italian decent.

It also brings to mind that the history of the Assumption Church is the history of the town itself. The immigrants progressed with the parish, and the parish kept pace with the development of the Peninsula City.

Fifty Years Ago

Picture a small town made up, in great part, of people from all over the world, and you will have a good idea of what Bayonne was fifty years ago.

Picture these people of foreign extraction, German, Polish, Italian, Irish, Russian and English, Swedish and Austrian, struggling to make a living, saving enough to send for their families across the ocean. The obstacles were many because Bayonne then was but the promise of what it is today.

Bayonne was at the beginning of its most rapid period of growth in 1900. Between 1900 and 1904, the population increased from 32,722 to 43,014, and by 1910 had reached 55,545—an increase of 22,823 in ten years.

The Italian population which numbered about 500 in 1900 had advanced to 1,758 by 1910.

Streets were being paved, churches were being built, library and park were added—and industrial firms were locating here.

The Year-1902

That was the year in which the dirt road that was Avenue C from 25th to 54th Street was asphalted at a cost of \$88,661.65.

That was the year in which a new-fangled contraption, the automobile, was

making its appearance in the town, scaring almost equally horses and their masters.

But the Bayonne Hook and Ladder Company, believing that horses were here to stay, erected a stable at 47th Street and Broadway.

Trolley lines were running cars along Avenue C.

Phonographs were still in the novelty stage and drew large, appreciative audiences to their squeaky efforts.

Plumed hats, shirt waists, and skirts that swept the ground were the mode for the ladies, while stiffly starched collars, high button shoes, and handlebar moustaches adorned the men.

That was the year that saw the events that led to the establishment of The Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Birth Of A Parish



CHAPTER II

Birth Of A Parish

HE Assumption parish really came into being when Father Michael Mercolino, the ardent young priest who had received Holy Orders from Agnello Renzullo,

the Bishop of Nola, on May 27, 1893, celebrated his first Mass in Bayonne. The day was June 3, 1902. The place was a small store located at 92 West 21st Street.

Not more than fifty people were present to watch the Sacred Host being raised over the improvised altar. Not more than 50 persons heard that first sermon delivered in the beloved mother tongue.

But when the priest had softly intoned the "Ite, missa est" that signified the end of the Mass, those fifty people found themselves reluctant to leave.

Inside that small, poorly furnished room was the essence of something they had been seeking ever since their arrival in America.

Other Roman Catholic churches were already established where the faithful might attend services without too great an inconvenience. St. Mary's Star of the Sea was situated on Fourteenth Street and Avenue C, while St. Joseph's Church and Our Lady of Mount Carmel were in

the more immediate vicinity of Twenty-second Street.

The Old and the New

But the Italian immigrants, familiar with no other language except their own, missed the counsel of the priest. They felt, in a sense, outsiders, because they were not able to understand the weekly sermon delivered in what to them was an alien tongue.

In Italy they had been reared in the protection of the church. They buried their dead with the comfort and prayers of their own priest. When they had serious problems they sought the advice of the pastor who knew most of them from the day of their birth.

They celebrated the name days of familiar saints with colorful church services, with gaiety, and the sometimes blatant notes of the village band.

In the evening they grouped on the piazza, shaded by the ancient trees, and watched the display of fireworks in splashes of brilliant color against the darkening sky.

Customs and Traditions

They heard the speech of the mayor and listened even more intently to the eloquent sermon of the visiting priest.

They walked in long, sometimes solemn, sometimes joyous processions. Church societies marched under the leadership of their pastor to meet the mission priests and escort them to the village church.

They pinned a mantle of money on the statue of a beloved saint as it was carried through the streets of the town.

All this was missing and missed in the new land.

Missing, until that memorable day in June, 1902, when fifty men and women lingered shyly in the back of the makeshift church to speak with and make welcome the priest who had been assigned as their pastor by the late Most Reverend John J. O'Connor, then Bishop of Newark.

A room bare of all but the necessities —a collection of 67 cents—an attendance

of but fifty souls—a young priest, bravely hiding his disappointment, speaking with a hope and confidence he did not feel.

The Ways of the Lord

A most inauspicious beginning, it would seem. Yet the ways of the Lord are indeed inscrutable!

For when those fifty pious souls finally left that room, they went forth fired with apostolic zeal. In a short time the entire Italian population of more than 500 was rallying with hope behind the new shepherd.

Such was their fervor and enthusiasm, that before that very year, 1902, came to a close, a small but beautiful wooden structure of worship was erected.

December 20, 1902, saw the dedication of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Dedication



CHAPTER III

The Dedication

the dedication ceremony. In number they were about 1,000—practically the entire Italian pop-

ulation of that time, and such friends as were interested in seeing the Italian people build a church of their own.

After months of preparation and planning, discussion and changes, here was the result, at last.

The dream had been realized, the hope fulfilled.

It was a proud and happy day. A day to be cherished. A day to be remembered. A day to be shared!

Brotherhood In Action

A study of the newspapers of the period reveals no references to the brotherhood of man, no pronouncements on Brotherhood Week. But the Evening Journal of December 20, 1902, in an advance account of the dedication, gives a concrete example of brotherhood in action.

The article reads in part:

"Before the dedication there will be a parade of Italian, Greek, and Slavic Societies of Bayonne and Divisions Nos. 17 and 20, Ancient Order of Hibernians." The article further relates:

"Bishop O'Connor will be met upon his arrival in Bayonne and escorted to the church.

"Father Isaac Whelan will assist the Bishop in the dedication."

"Twenty little girls in white will be in the procession."

An Event of Note

The December 22, 1902, edition of the Evening Journal, gives this account of the ceremonies:

"The dedication of Our Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church, West 23rd Street, yesterday was an event of note. Bishop O'Connor dedicated the newly built house of worship, which was filled with a large congregation.

"Bishop O'Connor was assisted by Father Isaac P. Whelan, the rector of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Avenue C and 14th Street.

"Father George C. Meyer, rector of St. Henry's Church, Avenue D and 26th Street, celebrated the first Mass in the new church."

Five Priests

"Five priests were on the altar including Father Wallace, Chancellor of the diocese and successor to the late Father O'Neill, formerly of Bayonne.

"A sermon was delivered in Italian. "The Bishop was escorted to Our

Blessed Virgin Mary Church by societies headed by the Fife, Drum and Bugle

Corps of Division 20, A.O.H.

"After the dedication ceremonies, Bishop O'Connor and the priests who took part in the ceremonies were entertained at dinner by the priest of Our Blessed Virgin Mary Church.

"The dinner took place at the rectory of Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish, the use of which was given the priest of the Italian Church by Father Swider."

The Real Story

That is how the account of the dedication of Our Blessed Virgin Mary Church, whose full title is The Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, reads in print. That is how it reads in black on white.

But to know the real story, we must read it in the hearts and minds and memories of those who stood in the wind and the cold of that winter day to witness the dedication ceremony.

There are those who remember how proudly the Italian, Greek, and Slavic Societies stepped to the gay notes of the Fife, Drum and Bugle Corps, as they escorted the bishop to the newly built church where the first Mass was to be celebrated . . . who remember how the bishop raised his hands to bless those who stood in reverent silence along the way.

Angelic Faces

Twenty little girls with scrubbed, angelic faces scattered flowers before the path of the church dignitaries as they approached the altar.

The perfume deepened and spread through the church as the people walked up the petal strewn middle aisle.

The parishioners took their places in the pews. The men in their best suits, gold chains dangling from vest pockets. The women in their finest shawls, fingering worn rosary beads.

Their Village Churches

The profusion of flowers and ferns on the altar reminded them of the rolling hills and verdant valleys of their native land. Not long ago they had picked the most beautiful and fragrant flowers to adorn their village churches.

Warm, sunny, glowing, colorful Italy! The land most of them would never see again!

For though the bond with the beloved motherland would never be severed, would grow stronger with the years, on this day the realization of their permanence in the new land came flooding in upon them.

In building their own church, they seemed to say to all who would listen:

Here are no transients-Here are a people whose roots are now embedded in the earth of a new land-Here are a people who will live and rear their young, love and labor, enrich and be enriched in the great, vital country of the United States of America.

The First Mass

There were not many dry eyes in the congregation as Father Whelan took his place before the altar to begin the Mass. Men and women wept for what they had left behind and prayed God's blessing upon what they hoped would be a glorious and happy future.

All present felt a surge of pride as the pastor came down to the altar rail to deliver the sermon in Italian.

As he spoke, the people leaned forward in their seats as if to register every word in their minds for all time.

The Pastor Speaks

"This is your church," he said. "Your efforts have achieved this temple of God. You have truly earned the right to be proud."

They were proud. Proud of their shepherd. Proud of the new place of worship. In it, the traditions of a remembered country would be observed. Their eyes rested lovingly upon the statues of Santa Lucia, San Antonio, and San Rocco.

Blessing From the Bishop

Later they listened to words of congratulation from Bishop O'Connor. He praised them for their faith and perseverance and urged them to hold fast to the worth-while customs they had brought from their mother country, Italy.

After the ceremony was over, many of them lingered to touch the hands and feet of the statues of familiar saints. They knelt before the tabernacle adoring the Sacred Presence.

They visited the one-room rectory behind the church, where from this day on, they might go to seek the counsel of their pastor.

The Beauty of a Cathedral

When they finally reached the street, they looked once again at the small, wooden church. In their eyes it had all the majesty and beauty of a cathedral.

They thought back to that day, four months before, on August 15th, the feast of the Assumption, when the cornerstone was laid.

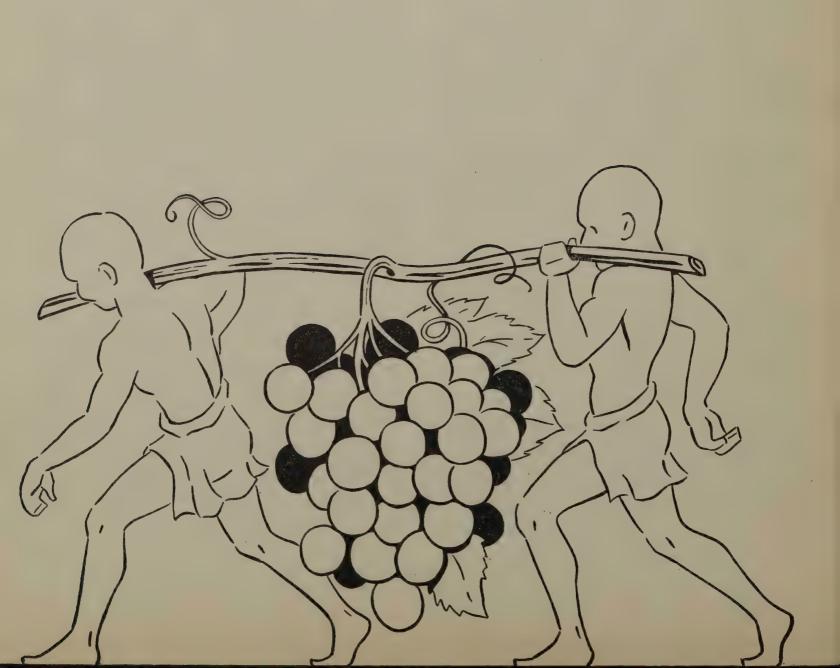
And some of them smiled to themselves. For they knew almost every nail and board that had gone into the church. They would miss the staccato sound of hammer against nail, as the building rose higher and higher against the sky.

It was a joyous day. A day of accomplishment. A day of fulfilment. A day sufficient unto itself.

Perhaps, of them all in that happy gathering, there was only one who realized that the work of the parish was just beginning.

Invokes God's Aid

That night in the sparsely furnished room behind the church, the young pastor lay sleepless on the pallet he had placed on the floor, his lips moving in prayer for God's blessing upon the days that lay ahead.



CHAPTER IV

Workers Of The Vineyard

HE days that lay immediately ahead were difficult indeed. That one night of sleeplessness presaged many such times for the Italian priest. But his trust and

confidence in God were so great, and his spirit so indomitable, that few sensed the deprivations he endured.

Long Winter Nights

The winter of 1902-1903 was particularly severe. There was no heat in the wooden rectory, built to the rear of the new church. Night after night the young pastor lay huddled on a pallet on the kitchen floor, trying to keep warm.

Often as he lay there watching the dying coals, he thought of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that flames eternally with the love of men.

As he prayed, he knew that one must learn to take the bad with the good, the bitter with the sweet. He murmured over and over "Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in Thee," and knew that there were better days to come.

The Spiritual Growth

Now that the material needs of the parish had been met in the erection of the little, wooden church, the young priest went about the task of building an even more beautiful spiritual structure.

He organized parish societies for the men, women, and children who were under his care. He taught the catechism. He preached from the steps of the altar. He urged the frequent reception of the sacraments as the means of attaining a fuller spiritual life.

He let it be known that old and young, in need of advice, were free to visit the rectory at any time. To the best of his ability he solved all the problems that confronted him.

Late Spring

The spring of 1903 came in with timid step. The pussy willows of March invaded a cold world. The yellow bannered forsythia unfurled slowly. The leaves of the trees opened almost reluctantly.

But by mid-spring, all was different. Suddenly the sun smiled warmly upon the world, and particularly, it seemed, on a spot called Bayonne.

Almost overnight there were blooms everywhere. The new green of spring spread itself riotously from lawn to lawn, from bush to bush, from tree to tree.

Fruitful Labor

With the fullness of spring, better days came to the Assumption Parish. Hopes became realities.

Membership in the societies and sodalities increased. Attendance at the daily masses grew. Each Sunday more of the parishioners knelt at the altar to receive their Eucharistic King. The labors of the winter and early spring began to bear fruit.

In a material way, also, the parish fared better. Benefit performances were arranged. Fencing matches were staged at Columbia Park on Avenue C, one block away, with the proceeds going to the church. By 1904, there was enough money for the purchase of two lots adjoining the church.

No Longer Adequate

For by that date it was apparent to all that in a very few years the little wooden church would no longer be adequate for the needs of the growing parish. The Italian district now included all the Italians in Bayonne as well as those living in the Greenville section to the south of Armstrong Avenue.

Civic Events

The city of Bayonne, too, was called

upon to meet the needs of a growing population.

The City Fathers chose a site at Avenue C and Twenty-sixth Street for a new building for Police Headquarters. A few years later a paid Fire Department took the place of the Volunteers.

By 1908, Bayonne was considered important enough for a stop-over by William Jennings Bryan, Candidate for President of the United States.

The Italian citizenry was cognizant of all these civic events and happy to be a part of such a thriving community.

The Year-1911

That was the year in which a victrola concert was given at Trinity Parish Hall on West Fifth Street.

A new electric ambulance was provided for Bayonne Hospital.

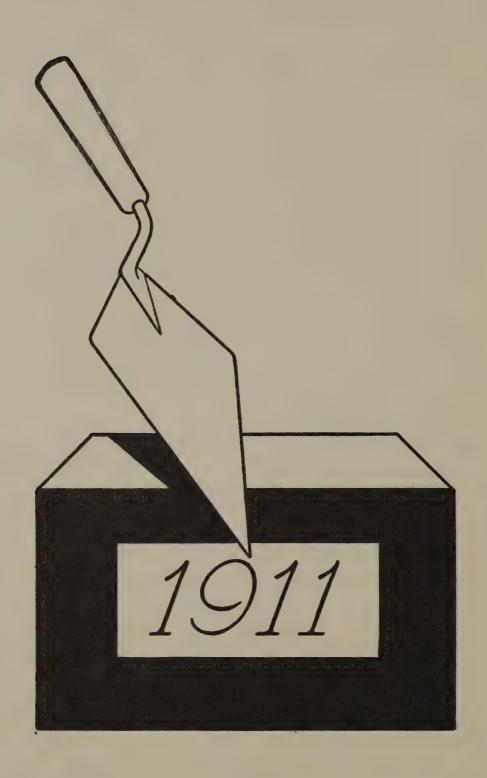
Tom Eick's bicycle girls came to the Bijou and issued a challenge to any young men and women in the city.

Bayonne decided to try the Des Moines method of government by commission.

The cornerstone of Public School 11 was laid at West 23rd Street and Boulevard.

That year saw the laying of another cornerstone that was a milestone in the history of the Italian community.

Plans For The Present Church



CHAPTER V

Plans For The Present Church

N the eleventh year of the twentieth century there occurred an event that the Bayonne Herald recorded in this manner:

"The cornerstone of the New Roman Catholic Church of the Assumption (Italian), on West 23rd Street, was laid with impressive ceremonies on Sunday afternoon.

"Preceding the ceremony there was a procession of the several Italian societies, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Hibernian Rifles, the Holy Name Societies of St. Mary's, St. Henry's, St. Vincent de Paul's churches, together with societies representing the churches of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel (Polish), St. Joseph's (Slavonian) and S. S. Peter and Paul (Lithuanian). Thomas Mariani acted as grand marshal and a half dozen brass bands furnished music.

Dignitaries

"On a platform covering the site of the new edifice were seated Mayor John J. Cain, District Court Judge Peter Stillwell, Father Peter E. Reilly of St. Henry's Church and Father Henry G. Coyne of St. Vincent de Paul's Church, Matthew T. Cronin, Professor Edward Sweeney, Dr. Merrill Swiney and others.

"Rev. Father Egan, Pastor of St. Mary's Church, officiated at the laying of the stone in which was deposited this document:

For Posterity

"On the 11th day of June, in the year of our Redemption 1911, Pope Pius X, happily reigning: Rt. Rev. John O'Connor being the bishop of Newark and Rev. Michael Mercolino, rector of the Church of the Assumption; William Howard Taft being president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, governor of the State of New Jersey and John J. Cain Mayor of Bayonne; Rev. A. M. Egan, delegated by the Rt. Rev. John J. O'Connor, in the presence of the clergy and a large concourse of people, laid the cornerstone of this church, to be erected to the honor of God and under the invocation of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Large Crowd

"Several thousand persons witnessed the ceremony, and at its conclusion Father Egan delivered the following address in the Italian tongue:

"In virtue of the privilege accorded to me by his lordship, the bishop of this diocese, and of the gentle invitation of your venerable pastor, to me is accorded the honor and the pleasure of placing the cornerstone of your church.

Historic Moment

"It is not necessary for me at this solemn and historic moment to say that I divide with you the joy of your hearts at the beginning of a work that will better morally and socially the condition of the Italian colony of Bayonne.

"This church is erected for the honor and glorification of God: you are erecting a temple where God will be honored and adored, and you will pray Him with Christian fervor to obtain all the favors for the spiritual welfare of your soul.

"No man can live without religion; the nature, the voice of your hearts, needs a place where a human being can sanctify his noble instinct of existence. This will be the altar of your religion, this will be the church where the man will accomplish what the law of his God and of his conscience require.

A Church of Your Own

"The big Italian colony in this city needs a large place where they can adore God according to the old country methods. Your church is the same church, but as you are unaware of this language, you need a church of your own until you get familiar with our language.

"I offer you my congratulations and pray that God will bless your work and fervor with success.

"God's blessing will be with you in

this enterprise, if you are willing to cooperate with Him in honoring the Divine Providence and cooperating with your pastor. You must help him financially and do all possible to obtain a good result.

"When you were in Italy you always upheld your great Christian religion, and remember that you are yet sons of the great church. Your fatherland is the land of Catholicity and she is covered with magnificent temples and chapels, where your noble faith is fervid in all your hearts.

Be Faithful

"Be then loyal to your faith. Go to mass every Sunday and on Holy Days. Frequent the sacraments and help your pastor, and in so doing you will honor the religion of your fathers and the religion of your adopted land.

"Blessed be the man that will be faithful to his religion and fatherland.

"I rejoice with you again, and I pray upon you all the blessing of God."

The Rev. Father Coppo, pastor of the Church of the Transfiguration (Italian) in Mott Street, New York, followed with an address in English.

Prof. Edward J. Sweeney followed with an eloquent address on the "Influence of the Church."

A Silver Trowel

"At the closing of the exercises Father Mercolino, the pastor, entertained the visiting clergymen with luncheon at the rectory, where, in grateful appreciation of his friendship for the people of the Assumption Church, he presented Father Egan with engrossed and elaborately framed resolutions of thanks and a silver trowel.

"Father Mercolino made the presentation, and Master Videtti, the bright little 10-year-old son of Nicholas Videtti, delivered the greeting and a fine bouquet from the parishioners."

Forty Years

More than forty years have gone by since the day that the cornerstone for the permanent church was laid. Forty years! Yet there are some who speak of it as if it were yesterday.

They will tell you of the distinguished company of priests who attended the ceremony. Priests from Jersey City, Newark, Paterson, and Elizabeth. Priests from all the other Catholic parishes of Bayonne.

Church Bells

They will speak with affection of Father Andrew Egan and the sermon that he delivered in Italian. What memories his words evoked:

Childhood days in the mattoni-roofed houses, in villages that nestled in the hills . . . Ancient churches beyond the limits of the town to which the priest made a weekly visit to say Mass for the farmers. . . . The sure-footed donkey who carried the priest along the narrow treacherous roads and returned laden with the offerings of the farmers: fresh eggs, chickens, game birds, cheese, figs, and minestre. . . . Church bells that

portioned out the day from dawn to dusk ... Memories ...

Of Brick and Stone

They will tell you how sweetly the children sang. And of the way the pastor's eyes shone as he painted a word picture of the new church.

It was to be of brick and stone. It would have a frontage of 46 feet on Twenty-third Street and a depth of 100 feet. There would be two tall steeples and the position of the proposed church on the knoll would make it conspicuous over a wide area.

They will describe the flag bedecked platform and the 7,000 people crowding the street. They will speak of the collection "away up in the four figures," so different from the sixty-seven cents collected at the first Mass, nine years before.

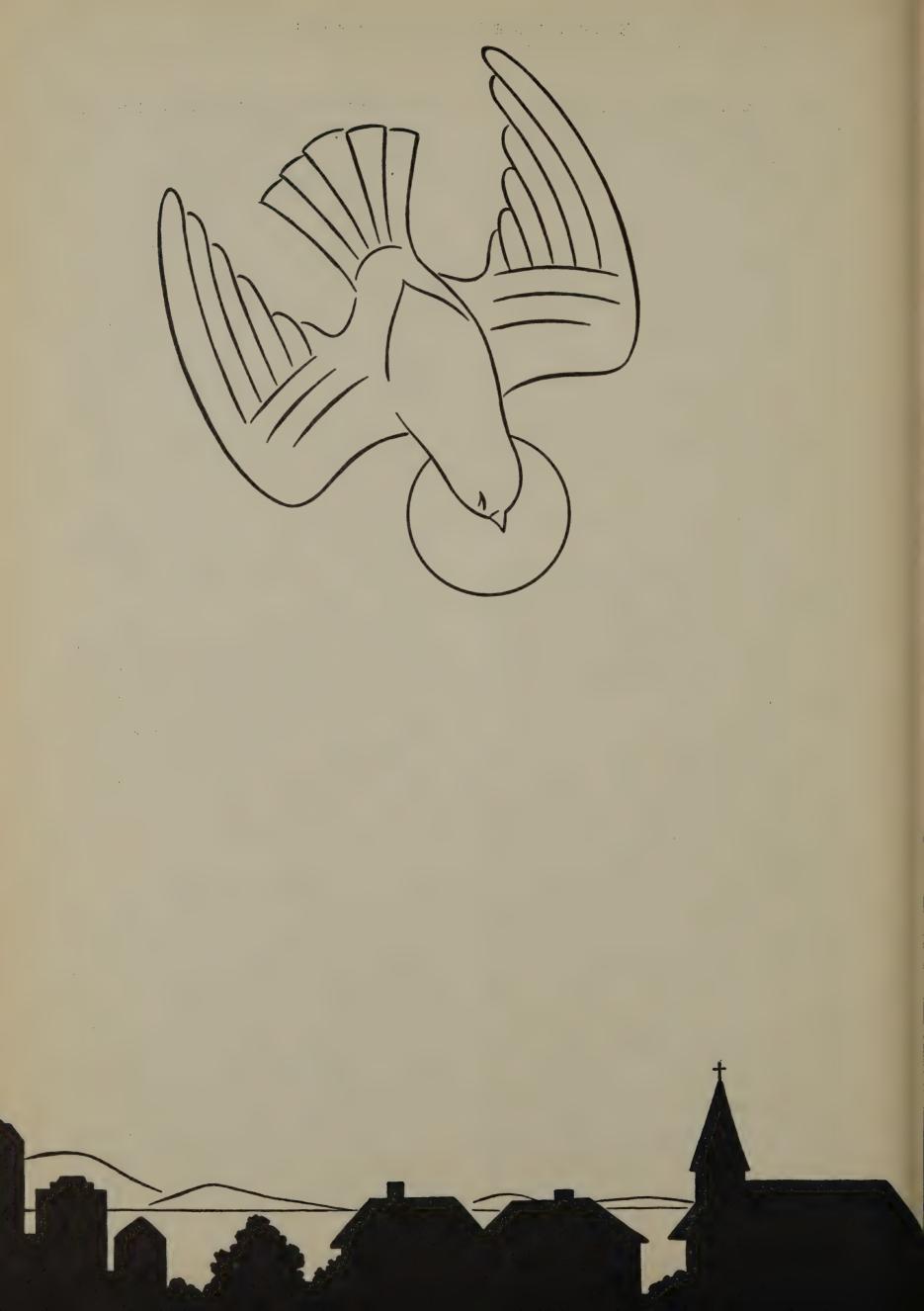
They will recall that the church was to be completed by the following Christmas at a cost of approximately \$50,000.

But in spite of the optimistic words of the pastor on that festive day, the new church was not destined to be dedicated until three years later.

Another Dream

Again the disappointment, again the waiting. Again the days and nights of anxiety. Again—the good times and the bad—the bitter and the sweet.

Three long years before another dream would come true for the immigrants. Three long years that culminated in the inspiring ceremonies of that second dedication. It was a day long awaited, yet longer to be remembered.



CHAPTER VI

The Second Dedication

tween the cornerstone laying and the dedication of the church were years of tension and unrest for the peoples of the earth. The

grim spectre of war was spreading its shadow over Europe and threatening the peace of the entire world.

Two small conflicts had flared up in rapid succession in the Balkan States. Italy had seized Tripoli from Turkey.

The menacing clouds of a "coming war" were gathering in an electric atmosphere. Man raced against time in the production of armaments.

Less than two months before the dedication of the new Assumption Church, the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria and Hungary was assassinated at Sarajevo.

Troubled Times

Less than three weeks before the dedication, Austria declared war. A short time later Germany entered the conflict against Russia and finally against France.

Troubled times in a troubled world.

While troops were marching to the European front, this country, too, was already feeling the effects of the war. Foreign trade markets were closed tempo-

rarily. Immigration was cut off. Military leaders predicted that the sinister shadows of war would spread rapidly across the ocean.

In Europe there was destruction and chaos.

A Peaceful City

But, here in Bayonne, a pinpoint on the map of the world, man had raised another temple to Him Whose coming was heralded by angel voices proclaiming "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will."

Here—soft organ music and not the ominous whine of bullets.

Words of wisdom and faith from priests of God, and not the bark of commands from military captains.

A procession of reverent people, and not the march of soldiers to the cadence of war drums.

Sparkling fireworks at night, and not the deafening thunder of cannons.

The dedication of the permanent church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was held in a peaceful city, with the same services and pageantry that marked the dedication of the wooden church nine years before.

Music of the Masters

There was a colorful procession. Organizations including Saint Rocco, City of Acerra Society, the Nazzareno Society, and societies from other parishes participated.

The Bishop blessed the faithful at the close of an inspiring talk.

Father Andrew M. Egan of St. Mary's Church delivered a sermon in Italian.

Clergy from near and far, city officials, and Dr. Vincent Conoscenti, consul at Newark, who represented the King of Italy, witnessed the dedication.

The pastor and his flock were happy. The band emphasized their joyous feelings with the music of the immortal Italian masters.

Demonstration of Faith

Here was an event long to be cherished. An accomplishment to be recorded for the generations of Italians to come. An outward demonstration of faith in the religion of their fathers.

The immigrants had toiled with determined efforts for nine long years, making their way in a strange land, becoming part of a fast growing community.

The "present" wooden church was to have its use in the expanding life of the parish. It would be converted into a hall suitable for meetings, recreation, and social functions.

Mark of Progress

The "handsome new edifice" was a mark of progress for the small group of

pioneers in the life of the Italian community. Some of them had left the shores of Italy with not much more than the clothes on their backs, and the dream of a better life in their hearts.

As they knelt in the new church on that dedication day of August 15th, the holy day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, their prayers were for peace in a troubled world.

The Year-1914

That was the year in which Bayonne, along with the rest of the nation's telephone users, paid a war tax of one cent to Uncle Sam on all 15 cent calls.

The city adopted a municipal flag of three colors, red, white, and blue, with a sailing vessel on the white space.

Residents of the city protested the use of bicycles by mail carriers.

The addition to the Bayonne Public Library was formally opened.

The first meeting of chicken fanciers was held. Three hundred birds were entered in the prize contests.

Building operations showed a big decrease from \$1,397,594 in 1913, to \$984,666. The decrease was due largely to the financial depression spreading over the entire country.

Bright Spot

That troubled year had its bright spot in the dedication of the permanent church.

A journalist of that period, writing for the Evening Review, saw fit to describe it in this manner:

"The new church is built of brick and

stone. It is very pretty. The interior decorations are in dainty colors, and the edifice had a beautiful appearance when lit up with electric lights that were turned on before the close of the service.

"The altar was decorated with poinsettas. The permanent decorations on the side walls are of basso relievo, including the journey to the Cross. There were a number of gifts to the church. These included pieces of statuaries, carpet for the church, etc.

Twelve Baskets

"When the first service was held every seat was occupied in the spacious edifice and in the rear there was hardly standing room. It was a generous crowd, too. The collection taken was very liberal and twelve baskets were used for the purpose.

"Father Mercolino delivered his sermon mostly in the Italian language, concluding with a few brief remarks in English. He was eloquent, impressive and, at times, dramatic.

"He said he wanted to see their children grow up to be good and useful American citizens, able to take their place alongside others of American birth in all the walks of life.

"He told them they owed a duty to the city and praised them for their peaceful living.

New Church Home

"Then he spoke in English to those surrounding him, expressing his appreciation of the assistance and the good will of the people of the city as evidenced in the realization of his greatest desirethis new church home. The Rev. Andrew M. Egan, the venerable pastor of St. Mary's Church, whose popularity is great with the Italian folk, was the next speaker.

"He preached a plain but interesting sermon and one that was much appreciated.

"He recalled the early history of the Italian Church in Bayonne and recounted its struggles.

"He said in part:

"We are all united in this one glory of the Catholic Church. We are all Roman Catholics and we should always on all occasions aid in the expansion of the Catholic Church. In Bayonne for example—I can remember when there was one little temple on Evergreen Street and I had to travel north and south. Look at this city today. What a glorious expansion of the church. We are now one-half of the population.

Message From the Pope

"Bishop O'Connor followed, and during the course of his remarks he was given the closest attention of the audience. He spoke in a happy strain and kindly, of the good work of Father Mercolino. He said among other things:

'I take this opportunity to congratulate you and your pastor on the completion of this beautiful church.

'Coming to a strange country you are in danger of not following the customs of your native land. It has happened time and again that people become weak in their faith, because things are not the same. 'Only recently I knelt before Pope Pius X and the Holy Father gave me a message to deliver to you. He said, 'Tell them to be loyal to their faith, and to receive the sacraments, and to receive them frequently.' It is a pleasure to me to deliver that message.

'You are of his own nationality. That blessing comes to you from the vicar of Jesus Christ and the successor to St. Peter. You as a nation have professed that Catholic faith that came down from Jesus Christ."

Night Celebration

The journalist makes no mention of the evening celebration. But there are those who remember:

Twenty-third Street was closed to outside traffic. Multi-colored electric lights outlined the area of festivity. Colored ribbons, Italian-made blankets, and tinsel, decorated the stands. The tangy aroma of sausage, peppers, and pizza, filled the air.

Children pleaded for torrone, for huge slices of watermelon, and for the mandorle strung in garland fashion on the bancarelle.

Fireworks Display

Father Mercolino walked among his people, pleased at their enjoyment of the band concert and their enthusiasm for the fireworks. There were giant bombs that exploded with such noise as to draw shrill cries from all. The cries were followed by soft exclamations of wonder as the brilliant colored flowers glowed against the sky.

The pastor waited to see the last piece, a huge American flag that drew applause from all the watchers.

As he made his way toward the rectory, small boys and girls broke away from their parents to clutch at his black skirts with their sticky hands. He smiled down at them, resting his hands lightly in blessing upon their heads.

Some Day Soon

The children were still in his thoughts as he knelt in his room to pray. Some day soon, God willing, his people would have a school where they might send their young.

Each school day would begin and end with a prayer. There they would find sisters who would teach and guide and interpret. There they . . .

Sleep put an end to conscious planning. The pastor slept, oblivious to the gay voices of his parishioners who were bent on prolonging the joyous occasion of the dedication of the beautiful permanent church.

The Blessing of The Paintings

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CHAPTER VII

The Blessing Of The Paintings

T was well that they were.

There were not too many joyous occasions in the days and weeks to come. It was inevitable that America would become in-

volved in the conflict that engaged the Europeans. All agreed it was just a matter of time. Finally on April 6, 1917, the United States of America was clutched in the macabre embrace of World War I.

But after the first excited weeks, when "the war" was practically the only topic of conversation, the people settled down to the necessities of everyday living.

Four Special Events

Four years after the Second Dedication, on Memorial Day, 1918, the members of the Italian parish celebrated four special events.

The red letter day in the life of the Assumption community featured "impressive and brilliant special services" in the new church.

The parishioners assembled in great numbers for:

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the ordination to the priesthood of their pastor who had already spent 18 years as a priest in the Peninsula City.

The blessing of the 14 hand-painted

pictures in the church interior.

The dedication of a new main altar. The first demonstration of the new electric lighting system.

A Memorable Week

Plans for the four-star event had been in the making for several months. Invitations had been extended to a long list of guests, including 100 priests and many prominent citizens.

The week of the blessing of the paintings was a memorable one in the history of the world:

The war news revealed that the Germans made slight gains along the Aisne-Marne front, and were reported three miles from Oulchy Chateau, a main objective.

American soldiers were described as "gallant" in the battle north of Soissons.

The Flanders front was renewed with heavy bombardment, and the allied line was holding.

The French captured Thillois, three miles northwest of Rheims.

List of Casualties

The war department announced the names of 175 on the list of casualties. During the same week, Washington said

it would call 300,000 more men by next June, the largest number at one time. A total of 687,000 had already been called.

It was a memorable week also in the life of the community:

A few days before the Memorial Day ceremonies, the Italian parishioners had joined thousands of other citizens at the depot. Bayonne's largest quota, 312 of its young men, left for Camp Dix to be transformed into soldiers.

A Wide Smile

The spectators cheered and the school children applauded. As the train pulled out, the "conscripts with their heads out of the car windows waved their hats and cheered and there was a smile, a wide smile on every face." Mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers were among the crowds and there were "many tears shed and many affecting scenes, but a display of enthusiasm was uppermost."

The same week, the Red Cross announced it had tripled its quota, with a total collection of \$138,197.08.

The Surgical Dressing Club planned for its biggest dance at the LaTourette Hotel.

A farewell banquet was held for soldiers leaving from the Tide Water Oil Company Dock office.

The yachting season started, with several organizations keeping open houses.

Last Minute Plans

That was also the week in which detailed, last minute preparations were made for the Assumption big events.

When the great day arrived, the cele-

bration started with a parade of the various societies throughout the streets of the city.

After the ceremonies, the Italian parishioners joined in another parade, citywide, honoring the war dead.

The "handsome paintings" in the church were blessed by Msgr. John C. Sheppard of New York. A solemn high mass followed.

The musical program included a solo, Ave Maria by Millard, sung by Rev. F. Auriemma of New York.

Monsignor G. Ferrante spoke in Italian, and Rev. Andrew M. Egan, pastor of St. Mary's Church and well-known in the Assumption parish, in English.

Silver Jubilee

The benediction was given by Father Mercolino, whose silver jubilee celebration was an occasion for "warmest of congratulations and best wishes of the community for the future."

The pastor was particularly proud of a beautiful silver-mounted candle which he had received the day before from his New York friends.

The candle burned with symbolic splendor during the services from the new altar decorated with ferns and flowers. The "handsome marble main altar" was admired by all. The pastor asked for prayers for the generous donor.

The parishioners followed with particular interest the blessing of the 14 pictures valued at more than \$15,000.

Said an art critic who had viewed the interior of the church:

Work of Art

"The work is superb. The harmony of the colors is perfect. The paintings now rank with the very best in the metropolitan district."

The paintings were executed by Anthony Verde of Rome, who made a special study of church paintings, Louis Piro of Brooklyn and Frank Valentine of Bayonne, who also carved the statues of saints adorning the side walls of the Assumption church.

Scenes from the Bible and from the lives of favorite saints were recorded in permanent strokes for the generations to follow.

The paintings showed St. John the Evangelist, St. Michael, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Matthew—all on the left sidewall as one entered the church.

On the right walls were paintings of St. Luke, St. Joseph, St. Anthony and St. Mark. In the rear of the church was a painting of St. Cecelia. On the ceiling, pictures of the Ascension, the Trinity, and the Assumption of the Blessed Mother.

Warmth and Color

The faithful lingered after the impressive and elaborate ceremonies to admire the works of art and to comment on the warmth and color they had added to the already beautiful interior.

When the pastor gave the benediction, those present bowed their heads and remembered their relatives "over there," in the midst of the first world war.

The Italian parish now extended to every part of the city where "there is an Italian or an Italian family." From 500

souls when the parish was organized, in 16 years the members had increased to an estimated 5,000.

Patriotic Demonstration

After the ceremonies, the Italian parishioners joined the rest of the community in the Memorial Day parade, "the biggest, most interesting, most patriotic demonstration in this city."

The Italian mothers whose sons were overseas marched side by side with other mothers whose boys were in service.

The parish soldiers and sailors joined other soldiers and sailors from Camp Dix, Camp Merritt, Pelham Bay and other training quarters, and were greeted with cheers all along the line of march.

The martial music, the marching feet, the flags, the speeches, the prayers, were a continued reminder of the boys overseas fighting at that very moment . . . or lying in hospital beds . . . or making the supreme sacrifice.

The Armistice

Six months later, when the armistice was signed and history recorded the names of the men killed in action, of the fifty-eight who gave their lives from Bayonne, five were listed from the Assumption parish.

Peace settled upon the world again.

War-torn Europe began a slow process of rebuilding.

In America, the people thanked God that the country, at least, had been spared the ravages of war.

Here in Bayonne, with the advent of peace, the Italian people began to talk again of the possibility of a parish school.



CHAPTER VIII

The School And The Convent

HE idea had been proposed first in 1914. But a long time was to go by before the hallways of an Italian parochial school would be filled with the laughter of

children on their way to the classrooms, before the maestre would move quietly about their chores in the serene atmosphere of the convent.

A long time. A twenty-five year span. A period that covered a World War, the aftermath of that war, and the most severe depression into which these United States of America had ever been plunged.

Years of unrest and struggle for humanity.

Years marked by important changes, by economic collapse, by isms striving to enslave a disheartened world.

The people were slowly forgetting the ruins of the First World War when a second, more devastating and cruel, was practically at their doorsteps.

Landmarks of the Past

War casualties were still slowly healing in army hospitals when diseases brought on by malnutrition laid siege to large segments of the civilian population.

Eventful years in the life of the com-

munity which was abandoning landmarks of the past and forging ahead with the aid of new methods and more modern ideas.

Eventful years in the life of the parish. New immigrants settled in our midst and were quickly absorbed in the activities of their adopted country.

The new born were baptized in solemn church services. Confirmations were held regularly. Weddings were recorded. Funeral masses were celebrated for the dead. Feast days of beloved saints received due recognition.

Palm Sunday

Twenty-five years of saving, of organizing, of planning for the future.

Finally, in 1939, the dream, never relinquished during the uncertainty of those long years, was to become a reality. The children of the parish were to have a school of their own.

Palm Sunday of that year dawned brightly in a clear sky, presaging the happy event.

During the mass, the worshippers listened to their pastor explain the significance of Palm Sunday, prelude to the crucifixion of the God-Man and His glorious resurrection.

The palms, symbol of victory and hope, such as were strewn in the path of Christ in His triumphant entry to Jerusalem, were distributed to the faithful. Later they would shape the palm into crosses and wear them on hats and lapels.

A Restless World

It was significant that the event was to take place on the observance of the joyous day that Christ entered Jerusalem.

For the parish crowds it was a day of rejoicing—a day of gratitude, and prayers.

Prayers were offered in a special way for the ills of a restless world.

In Europe there was a steady beat of drums that announced devastation and death.

Here, the church bells rang out with hope and faith the afternoon of April 2, 1939, heralding another event of peace.

Dark Wings of War

The bells would be silenced in Europe within a week and the dark wings of war would spread rapidly over the face of the earth.

Within a few days—even before the Resurrection of the Prince of Peace—Il Duce's armies would invade Albania, under cover of warship guns and bombing planes, and march into Tirana.

King Zog, in flight, would abdicate. Britain feared the occupation of the strategic Greek-owned Island of Corfu.

The French Government planned an increase in its fighting forces.

Hitler said he did not want war.

Russia mobilized.

The Netherlands ordered the defense of its borders strengthened because of war dangers.

The Bursting of Bombs

Hitler's press warned Greece and Yugoslavia not to let themselves be misused by Great Britain and France. The Fuehrer insisted on the return of the Reich's lost colonies.

The United States consulted Belgium and other countries on bartering surplus American cotton and wheat for rubber and tin, important war materials.

In Europe, the bursting of bombs scattered the good earth over the bodies of the innocent.

Here, in a small parish three thousand miles away, spades were wielded and shovelfuls of earth were turned, preliminary to building.

Here, the bells rang out their message of hope, calling the faithful to the happy occasion. The altar was decorated with ferns, lilies and spring flowers, and the outside of the church with flags and long strings of electric lights.

The bells were a welcome sound that Palm Sunday afternoon.

The Year-1939

A year of hatred and death for the world. The occupation of Albania was followed by the Nazi troops attacking Poland, plunging Europe, and the world, into the Second World War.

Headlines grew bigger and blacker as Poland crumbled, at Warsaw.

The French advanced in the Saar zone, and then fell back below the Saarland.

Germany's heavy artillery pounded at the French Army.

Roosevelt asked for an additional \$112,000,000 to further strengthen the army and navy.

Russia mobilized a million more men for preparedness in a world soul-sick with war fever.

Mussolini placed Italy on a war basis and increased the size of its army.

The Bayonne Scene

That was also the year in which Bayonne observed the 70th anniversary of its incorporation as a city, in a celebration sponsored by the Bayonne Historical Society.

Bayonne planned for the removal of the unused trolley tracks along Avenue C.

The Standard Oil Company plant in Constable Hook, erected in the early 1880's for the manufacturing of wooden barrels, was closed.

An addition of \$64,247 was approved by President Roosevelt on the WPA project for construction of a firehouse and drill tower at 16th Street and Avenue A.

Citizens inspected the new Port and Industrial Terminal, "the finest of its kind on the Atlantic Seaboard," which took more than a year in building.

A two-way system was installed to coordinate the activities of the Fire Department.

The Two Ceremonies

That was the year that the federal government awarded a \$5 million contract to Bayonne's Electric Boat Company for the construction of a torpedo and subchaser fleet.

That was also the year in which two important events took place in the life of the Assumption parish.

On the afternoon of Palm Sunday, April 3rd, the cornerstone for the parochial school and convent was laid, and eight months later, there was the blessing and the dedication.

Both ceremonies were attended by distinguished guests, visiting priests and large crowds. In both ceremonies, the spiritual and physical growth of the parish was stressed.

The two events were preceded by parades, featured inspiring talks, and were closed with the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Ground Breaking

The Bayonne Times account of the cornerstone laying said in part:

"Work on the new \$244,000 parochial school and convent of the Assumption Roman Catholic Church at Twenty-third Street and the Boulevard, ground for which was broken yesterday, will start tomorrow when shovels begin excavating for the foundations, according to John D'Elia of the D'Elia Building Company, contractors, who will erect the structure.

"A colorful ceremony, witnessed by an estimated 1,500 people, marked the ground breaking yesterday afternoon.

"Vicar General John C. McClary of the Archdiocese of Newark blessed the ground and turned the first shovelful of earth. Father Michael Mercolino, pastor of the Assumption Church, turned the econd bit of ground, followed by the Rev. Peter Paris, his assistant.

For God and Country

"Trustees of the church next wielded the spade and then the faithful stepped forward to place cash offerings in the excavation. The money contributed will go into the building fund.

"Following the ground breaking a sermon was delivered by the Very Reverend Monsignor William F. Lawlor, pastor of St. Mary's Church, who declared:

'On this ground there will be erected a structure for God and for the service of our country.'

"The school and convent will be of fireproof construction, equipped with all modern improvements in plumbing, heating, ventilation, and electrical systems. The floors and stairs will be of terrazzo and the walls of tile.

The School Auditorium

"The school auditorium, planning to seat 1,000, will be suitably decorated. It will be equipped with a modern kitchen. Recreational facilities, including bowling alleys, billiard tables and the like, will be located in the basement.

"The school will be staffed by nuns, each a college graduate, speaking both English and Italian fluently." This time again, as on previous occasions, we find the expressions of joy and pride, the colorful demonstrations of a people pleased with the present development, but aware of the ever-increasing demands of a growing parish.

The House of The Lord

In the House of the Lord, candles burned with the radiant light of hope and faith.

Groups of colored bulbs, in the form of flags, illumined the 23rd Street grounds. A grandstand, with a background of flags, was erected for the honored guests. Another stand nearby was for the band that played far into the night.

The come-on-taste-my-specialties call of the vendors attracted the delighted shouts of children, whose hands and mouths soon were filled with the festa goodies.

A Wistful Gleam

Mothers and fathers in holiday mood, inspected and bought the colorful articles from the stands.

The old parishioners had a wistful gleam in their eyes... they remembered that first mass in a rented store and that first collection years and years ago.

Who but they could fully evaluate the years of effort that had culminated in this joyful day?

The Blessing of The Two Buildings



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The Blessing Of The Two Buildings



F THAT Palm Sunday was a memorable one, few celebrations, if any, can equal the blessing of the two buildings adjoining the church grounds, for color and

drama, for significance and spiritual value.

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Double the number of visiting Monsignori and Priests, and of the crowd witnessing the ceremonies. Double the effort by a large committee including representatives of all the church societies. The Archbishop of Newark, the Governor of New Jersey, the Italian Consul of New York, headed the impressive list of dignitaries.

The parade, reviewed by Archbishop Walsh and Governor Moore, was headed by a detachment of police. Behind the police came the colors, and more than 50 members of the Holy Name Society in full dress.

The crowd watching the event was estimated at 2,500, and more than 100 clergy joined in greeting the Archbishop for the formal opening of the new church and convent, dedicated to "American ideals."

That Other Winter Day

Several thousand men, women, and children of the various church societies

and of more than a score of Italian organizations in the city stood reverently in the cold December afternoon (reminiscent of that other winter day of 1902) as the Archbishop raised his hand in benediction.

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The choral music was sung by the junior and senior choirs, and the children of the first four grades took part in the ceremony delivering short addresses and reading several poems.

Such was the enthusiasm and eagerness of the parishioners for their new school that they had not waited for the completion of the building.

Work was still in progress, hammers and saws were still humming, when the first children were registered.

World In Chaos

Classes had been inaugurated in the fall of the year, and the Assumption listed a registration of 180 students, some of whom were transferred from other parochial schools.

The church societies included St. Nicola Di Bari, St. Anthony, St. Ann, St. Gabriel, St. Michael, St. Vito, Children of Mary and the Crocifisso Society.

The week marking the dedication ceremonies will not soon be forgotten.

It was also a week of far-reaching im-

portance in the history of a world in chaos.

Finland drove back Soviet invaders from the Port of Petsamo. The United States planned a "moral" embargo on shipments of aircraft and armaments to the Soviet.

Pope Pius XII made many efforts to restore peace in Europe, while German soldiers were at work building the Westwall fortifications.

The War Front

Anglo-French Allies were bidding for Japanese support in a combined front against Communism. Italy sent her air fleet to aid the Finns who captured 150 Red tanks in a single engagement on the Carelian front.

Nazi Germany sharply warned Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, to consider the advantages of German friendship before "it is too late."

The League of Nations tried the Reds as aggressors in the Finnish War.

In America, peace would be enjoyed for a while longer. In another year, (almost to the day of the Assumption school dedication) Japan would attack Pearl Harbor, and American youths would march to the war fronts.

... For now, at least, there was peace. The blessing of the two buildings was offered with prayers for peace in a peaceful atmosphere. . . .

In a Quiet Way

Bayonne that week went about its business in a quiet way.

Merchants announced a proposal for widening the business section of Avenue

C, thereby permitting parking in the center of the street.

Work started on the first 23 streets to be repaved as part of a WPA project.

St. Mary's Holy Name Society presented for two nights a comedy, "Nothing But The Truth," on the stage at St. Mary's Hall.

The Knights of Columbus conferred degrees on a class of 25 candidates.

President Roosevelt approved a WPA project carrying an appropriation of \$17,-850 for the elimination of overhead wires in the city's police and fire department systems.

Socialized medicine was debated by high school students before the Bayonne Kiwanis Club.

Distribution Center

Standard Oil Company of New Jersey began construction of an \$81,500 warehouse in the Constable Hook plant as a distribution center for bulk products.

The largest crowd in 10 years attended a concert of the Bayonne Symphony Orchestra at Junior High School.

The Social Security Board revealed that 300 aged men and women from Bayonne had filed applications for old age benefits.

And the colorful blessing and dedication ceremonies inspired these lines in the local press:

"Bayonne yesterday was enriched both spiritually and materially by the dedication and blessing of Our Lady of Assumption Parochial School at Twentythird Street and Boulevard.

"The Most Rev. Thomas J. Walsh, Archbishop of Newark, blessed the school building in an impressive rite following a parade from the city line to the church.

Moving Action

"One of the most moving actions during the afternoon was the presentation of the school flag, donated by Star of the Sea Council No. 371, Knights of Columbus.

"Grand Knight Joseph N. Nugent made the presentation and Rev. Michael T. Mercolino, pastor, accepted.

"So touched was Father Mercolino by the implications connected with the acceptance of the American flag that for several moments he could merely hold it reverently.

"His head, whitened by 70 years, many of which have been spent in furthering interests of his church and people, was momentarily bent. He straightened quickly and proudly accepted the flag. The glint in his eyes belied his age.

The Band Played

"Another flag was dedicated earlier by Archbishop Walsh and pulled to the top of the school flagpole by Gov. A. Harry Moore's aide, Col. Hugh Kelly, while the governor, Mayor James J. Donovan, and Father Mercolino stood at attention. A band played the Star Spangled Banner.

"A bronze tablet, bearing the names of all those assisting in the construction of the school, was unveiled by Marie Fiumefreddo, daughter of Charles F. Fiumefreddo, president of the Holy Name Society.

"The two principal addresses were de-

livered by Msgr. Lawlor, superintendent of the parochial schools of the Archdiocese of Newark, and Father Mercolino, who spoke in Italian."

The Next Two Weeks

The dedication was not over on that day, however. For the next two weeks the church societies of the parish planned additional celebrations in honor of the completion of the school, recreational building and convent.

The school children staged an entertainment for parishioners, benefactors and friends at 4 p.m. on December 10th.

The inaugural banquet was served December 17th. Five hundred parishioners and invited guests filled the air conditioned auditorium.

Many of the churchmen spoke in Italian and the friendship and peace between the Italian and American peoples was repeatedly stressed.

Respect for the Flag

The years of struggle of a group of young Italian immigrants, the sacrifices of many years, the plans and the prayers, the scenes and the events were described by the various speakers that night.

Praised were the pastor and his flock for the dedication ceremonies of a week before, for the impressive arrangements, the display of faith and patriotic feeling.

The keynote was sounded by the pastor himself.

"The Assumption Parochial School," he said, "will be dedicated to the preservation of American ideals, and children who study here will learn respect for the flag."



CHAPTER X

After Long And Fruitful Years

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wo years later, after America had been catapulted into World War II by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, 31 men of the Assumption Parish were to die for

that flag. The mothers of children attending the school were to be awarded the Gold Star.

After almost four years of war, the armistice with Japan was signed on August 15, 1945.

An uneasy peace had once more descended upon the world when the parish suffered the loss of its founder and shepherd, with the death of Monsignor Michael T. Mercolino on October 24, 1945.

Fruitful Years

The pastor went to his heavenly reward after long and fruitful years in the service of God and his fellowmen.

Those years were crowned with success and achievement in his main interests: the development of the Assumption Church and the welfare of the Italian people.

During those years, many honors were bestowed upon the Monsignor by the church, religious orders, civil authorities and members of the parish. He was:

By order of Pope Benedict XV, commissioned a Cavaliere of the First Degree of the Noble Order of Constantiniano of St. George.

He was:

Elevated to the rank of a domestic prelate by Pope Pius XII with special services in the church he helped to found, and whose destiny he guided.

He was:

Designated as an archdiocesan consultant. The office investiture was given by Archbishop Thomas J. Walsh of Newark.

He was:

The beloved guest at impressive celebrations marking the 35th year of his ordination to the priesthood, and again on the 50th anniversary.

He was:

The recipient of special honors and citations by the Italian government for his collection of gold for Italy's cause in the war days, by the people of his parish for his years of leadership and guidance, by other nationalities in the community for his varied interests in civic and charitable causes.

Last Tribute

Sadly, reverently, the parish paid a last tribute to its spiritual father.

There were those who remembered the pastor as he had been when he first came to Bayonne, young, dark, vital, glowing. As they filed past the bier their eyes grew moist at the sight of the still figure.

Yet they could not help noting the look of contented repose on the priest's countenance.

It is not uncommon that a man review his whole lifetime as he feels death approaching.

Surely, God must have granted the pastor a moment of supreme satisfaction as he thought back over the events of the years.

Perhaps he was permitted to see his lifetime as a perfect whole, with all the parts finally fitting into place.

And he may have heard the voice of Christ saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

End of an Era

The pastor's task had been completed. No more goals. No more striving. There was for him now only peace. Such peace as the world can not give.

Those who remembered the first days of the parish realized that they were witnessing the end of an era.

The day that Monsignor Michael Mercolino died marked an ending—a beautiful, blessed ending to a life dedicated in all its fullness to God.

An ending! But also a beginning!

Somewhere . . .

Somewhere, a young priest, as yet unnamed, was destined by God to become the second pastor of the Assumption Church.

Somewhere, a young curate was going about his duties unaware that nine months later he was to lead the Italian people of Bayonne in a second era of progress and spiritual growth.

His First Day



CHAPTER XI

His First Day



REY clouds hung over the city like a dark cloak, hiding the radiance of the morning sun.

The lowering sky of that misty August day darkened ominously.

The atmosphere was damp and muffled. There was no breeze. It looked as if it would rain at any moment.

The toast-colored sedan made its way slowly along the Hudson County Boulevard. The driver turned left at Twentythird Street in Bayonne, and left again, after a short distance, heading for a steep uneven driveway.

The back fenders and bumper scraped noisily against the narrow, unfamiliar side walls of concrete.

Official Greeting

The driver emerged from his car seconds later, and inspected the slight damage. He smiled to himself.

Just then, two priests came out in the yard to meet him. Behind them was a white haired man wearing an ill-fitting apron.

All three smilingly spoke words of welcome to the strange, young priest.

That marked the first official greeting

given the Rev. Dominic J. Del Monte, the new pastor of Our Lady of Assumption Roman Catholic Church.

Father Del Monte had been promoted by order of Archbishop Thomas Walsh, of the Archdiocese of Newark, from St. Anthony's Church, East Newark, to direct the spiritual life of 10,000 souls in the Italian parish of Bayonne.

Cordial Atmosphere

The new pastor smiled good-humoredly at Father Peter L. Paris, who had been administrator of the parish until his arrival, and Father Ferdinando Di Padua, a curate at the church for many years.

"I was initiated on the way," he chuckled. "Look at my car."

There was a certain warmth in that first meeting; a pleasant, cordial atmosphere, that was to continue all the time in which the four men were to be closely associated.

It was noon.

The new pastor was escorted directly to the dining room on the far side of the rectory. Since there was, as yet, no house-keeper, the man in the immense white apron, Vito Dorio, who did all sorts of jobs about the parish, improvised a meal.

The First Visitors

The menu for that Friday consisted of a dish of spaghetti, cooked al dente, with garlic browned in olive oil for sauce, a favorite Italian dish on meatless days. Fried fish. A glass of Chianti wine. Provolone and fruit.

When lunch was over, the first visitors came in to pay their respect to the new pastor.

Later, Father Del Monte entered his new office for the first time. The office, a small rectangular room, is located in the center of the rectory building. A small door, to the right, leads to the outer office, and a passageway, in the rear, to the kitchen.

Thoughtfully, the young priest sat at his desk and planned for the activities of his first day as head of the Assumption parish.

His main desire was to visit the church, and later the church property and its various buildings.

Before the Tabernacle

Upon entering the church his eyes went immediately to the red vigil light that bore witness to the Divine Presence.

As he made his way to the altar he was conscious of the general atmosphere of warmth in the small, but beautiful church.

Glancing to either side, he saw, in evenly spaced niches, the statues of the saints to whom the Italian people pay special reverence.

He knelt in adoration before the tabernacle for a long time. When he finally rose, he sent a prayerful greeting to all the heavenly figures whose statues were grouped about the altar. He knew that he would have recourse to them many times during the years of his pastorate.

Sunless Days

To the right were St. Anthony of Padua, Our Lady of the Assumption, St. Judas Taddeo, and St. Gabriele all'Addolorata. On his left were the Sacred Heart, St. Joseph, Santa Lucia, Madre Cabrini, and Our Lady of Fatima.

As Father Del Monte turned from the altar, his eyes moved upward to the pale blue sky, where gold stars gleamed in the uncertain light sifting in from the half opened windows.

And it came to him that on other sunless days, on days when he was to know a darkening of the spirit, here within the church he would find the Eternal Light. Here, in the house of God, his darkest days would be lightened.

He took note of the paintings, magnificent in their decorative splendor, depicting graphically biblical scenes, events in the New Testament, and incidents in the lives of the saints.

Special Meaning

The paintings, the statues, the stained glass windows, the mahogany pews, the choir loft, the lights—all had a special meaning, a deep significance on this memorable day.

Here, he would pray and say Mass. Here, he would officiate at christenings and weddings, listen to confessions, and offer prayers for the dead.

He would kneel at this very altar day in and day out. From its steps he would preach the Word of God, and try to instill in his followers the ideals of faith, charity, and hope, to which his own priestly life was dedicated.

Refuge and Strength

This would be his refuge and his strength in the days to come—a place where he would kneel quietly to seek the counsel of the Almighty when beset by the complex problems of his parish.

But more than that.

In his new role of pastor, he would henceforth be the custodian of this church and all other parish property. It would be his duty to see that this Temple of God and all other church buildings be preserved, protected, enlarged, if necessary.

A sense of his great responsibility engulfed him.

Once again he returned to the altar. He offered a fervent prayer for the repose of the soul of the first pastor, Monsignor Mercolino, whom the members of the parish had loved.

An Humble Prayer

He prayed to God that he, too. would serve his people to the best of his ability, according to his God given talents.

He realized that it was not for him to pattern himself after any other person, however good and holy, but rather that he make his own place among the people. He must earn their respect, and merit their confidence in his own right, by virtue of his own personality, his own talents. For each man must serve God in his own way.

He bowed his head and prayed humbly, "Let my way be according to Thy Way, O my God."

Ideas for Progress

It was in a pensive mood that he left the church.

Outside, he noticed that the clouds were gradually disappearing from the sky, and the sun was breaking through.

He made quick, mental notes of the ideas that came to his mind, ideas for future consideration, for improvement, for progress. Bits of suggestions—nothing definite—but something to store away and think about later on.

The pastor was "extremely pleased" with the next visit.

The Convent

The quiet, cool atmosphere of the convent was very pleasant on this first day of August, 1946.

Two waiting rooms on either side of the entrance were simply, neatly furnished. A small desk in one corner, to the left, bore a huge potted plant. In all room arrangements, there was a note of order and calm, and quiet and peace.

That same order prevailed throughout the convent:

In the grey tile sides of the long, narrow corridor.

In the tidy kitchen, with utensils brightly polished and hung in uniform manner.

In the long study and conference room, with a polished mahogany table to the center.

The neat sleeping quarters on the second floor. The beautiful chapel, condusive to meditation and prayers, with its well-executed paintings, miniature pews and fresh-cut flowers.

Maestre Pie Filippini

The black-robed nuns of the Institute Maestre Pie Filippini moved softly about, inspiring confidence and trust. Father Del Monte knew of the good work of this group, which had its beginning when Santa Lucia Filippini founded the Institute which is dedicated to the religious and civic instruction of youth in elementary and secondary grades, and to Catholic Action among the Italian people.

Now he felt privileged to be able to work with the sisters for the young of the parish.

Outside once more, the pastor felt the hot humid air of the August afternoon.

The School Building

But his tour of inspection was not yet over. There was the Assumption School building.

He walked up the long concrete stairs to the third floor, his feet echoing along the quiet corridors. The school was empty, since vacation had started a month before.

The classrooms were painted a light blue color against a white ceiling. The sunrays rested on the shining tops of the desks. He entered the small unpretentious office of the Mother Superior, at the far end of the long corridor. From the window, he glanced outside. The view was obstructed by a wooden frame building on the next property. Directly beneath, he noticed with pleasure, were two unexpected cherry trees.

Neat and Tidy

The desks in all classrooms were in uniform order. The blackboards were scrubbed clean. The teachers' desks, neat and tidy.

The pastor paused . . .

He could picture the intent faces of the boys and girls with their clean shirts and starched dresses.

Small hands laboring with arithmetic problems on the blackboard.

The maestre holding an open book before them explaining a chapter from the New Testament.

He could hear the young, innocent voices raised in hymns to God....

The young ones. The hope and the future of the parish and the country. The men and women of tomorrow. In this school, please God, they would be taught to retain the best of their Italian Catholic tradition while moving forward in the American way. . . .

The Large Auditorium

Downstairs, the pastor stopped for a quick inspection of the huge 1000-seat auditorium, with its large stage, its cloakroom and kitchen facilities.

In the basement were the six bowling alleys, with a long bar nearby. The

scoreboards had figures written on them. The pins were lined up way in front like miniature soldiers ready for a march.

The pastor's eyes brightened. What better place was there for the youth of the parish to find recreation!

Outside the school building he paused and looked about.

A crowded section of the city loomed before him. Stores, garages, attached houses, large buildings.

The Noise of the Street

He could hear the traffic roaring by on the Hudson Boulevard, a few feet to the left.

He could hear the noise of the adjacent factories.

He could feel the beat and pulse of his people in this Centerville section of the city.

Space was limited. There were no shade trees, except for two small maples directly opposite the convent.

He took a longer look at the sandy aspect of the church property, and knew what must be done to enhance it.

A little green, perhaps. . . .

To set off the brick convent and to shade the imposing school building.

A little green. . . .

To bring out the beauty of the small church, with its double concrete stairway and the unusual built-in canopy at the entrance.

A little green. . . .

The Unfamiliar Stairs

He walked slowly to the rectory.

The grapes were not yet heavy on the

vines that grew in an arch to the side of the building.

He was reminded of his own labors in the vineyard of the Lord and he prayed that the years that lay ahead would be fruitful.

That night, as he ascended the unfamiliar stairs to his room, thoughts again crowded his mind.

Sleep did not come easily in a strange room, and a strange bed.

The echo of the street noises and traffic reached him, as he lay, deeply conscious of his innumerable responsibilities.

Prays for Wisdom

He prayed for wisdom, wondering about the new parish, the people he was going to meet, the visitors, the ones seeking counsel. . . .

He prayed that he would serve the Lord wisely, and accomplish much with His help.

My Home

This is my home, he thought. This is where I will spend my life. I must try to do as much good as possible. Work and serve and develop and improve—with love, and zeal and painstaking care.

This is my home.

His eyes softened in the darkness of the room.... To teach the eternal truth, so that people would turn to God, with faith and hope and love, as he turned to God now, and to the Blessed Virgin.

The words of St. Paul were in his mind as he finally drifted off to sleep;

"I can do all things in Him Who strengthens me."



CHAPTER XII

He Belonged

wo days later, he faced his flock for the first time in the crowded Mass services.

He scanned the unfamiliar faces, and spoke from his heart.

He told his parishioners how pleased he was to be with them, to be part of them.

That Sunday afternoon, the parish societies officially welcomed him in their midst, with an open house.

"Hundreds of parishioners of Our Lady of the Assumption Church," said the newspaper account, "visited the rectory of the church during an open house to extend personal greetings to the newly-appointed pastor, Rev. Dominic J. Del Monte, a native of Newark."

At the Assumption Auditorium, a large crowd was on hand for the celebration.

Parish Leaders

Welcoming speeches were delivered by parish leaders and heads of the various church societies. "Father Del Monte was presented with flowers by children of Our Lady of Assumption School. Frances Gagliardo, Gerald Lynch and Marie Barella were song soloists. The parish choir also appeared on the program.

"Though here only a few days, Father Del Monte has met a large number of Bayonne citizens and was impressed by the friendly reception accorded him."

He Was No Stranger

The new pastor was "visibly moved" as he responded to the applause of the welcoming throng that night.

He said he wanted to "instill a greater interest in activities of the church among our parishioners."

He said of special interest to his heart was the promotion of youth activities in the parish."

The faithful cheered.

They seemed genuinely pleased with their new pastor. He was no stranger to them.

He belonged.



CHAPTER XIII

The Days That Followed

HE days and weeks that followed were days and weeks of concerted activity.

The second era had begun in an atmosphere of increased work,

in a detailed program for the spiritual and physical development of the parish.

New ideas were tried out, new methods used, new ways were found to bring to the Assumption parish essential improvements.

The young pastor was busy in those early days carrying out his program for the betterment of the parish.

There was much to be done.

Repairing and painting of the church and the church buildings. Reorganizing societies and forming new ones. Directing and initiating sport acivities. Supervising the school. Counseling the parishioners of all ages.

Accent On Youth

The accent was on the youth of the parish. Working for their welfare was one of Father Del Monte's prime objectives.

The days and weeks that followed were filled with almost unceasing labor for the vineyard.

Slowly, gradually, there was progress.

Slowly, gradually, the young pastor was beginning to see his plans taking shape, his ideals being instilled in the hearts and minds of his followers.

A Welcome Task

It was not an easy task.

But it was a welcome task for the young priest who was filled with zeal and enthusiasm, who minded neither hard work nor long hours in the service of the people God had placed in his care.

The Work Begins

The result:

A bit of green to adorn the parish buildings; trees, shrubbery, grass, and flowers wherever there was a vacant space, to erase the sandy aspect of the property.

A line of forsythia along the side of the school building facing the Hudson Boulevard.

The result:

Essay contests, special assembly programs, prizes, entertainment for the pupils of the school. The buying of new equipment for the comfort of the young, the trying out of new methods for their intellectual growth.

The result:

The forming of a CYO for the young people, and their participation in the bowling tournaments and other sports activities. Teams and individuals from the Assumption parish went on to win many trophies, competing time and again for championship honors.

The Patient Hours

The result:

Reorganization of the Parent-Teachers Association, after many patient hours of finding new ways to interest the parents in what the Sisters of the Pontificial Institute of Religious Teachers Filippini were doing for their youngsters.

When the time came for enlarging the school facilities, the Assumption PTA was among the first to donate toward the building fund.

The result:

New interest in the Holy Name Society of which the pastor was the chaplain. Participation in the annual Holy Name parade, and planning for the annual father and son communion breakfast.

The result:

Reorganization of Our Lady of Assumption Post, 1620, Catholic War Veterans. Election of officers, installation ceremonies, and the presentation of pins to past officials who had served well.

The result:

The formation of the Assumption School Band composed of more than 40 boys and girls who play at Holy Name parades, at civic and other functions and on the feast days of saints.

The Monument

The result:

The dedication of a monument at the corner of 23rd Street and the Boulevard, in memory of the thirty-one soldiers of the parish who gave their lives for their country in World War II.

The monument consists of a four-foot Carrara marble base with a plaque listing the names of the dead, surmounted by a statue of a soldier.

The statue was sculptured by Aldo Buttini of Carrara, Italy, who also created the likeness of Mother Cabrini for the Cabrini High School in the Bronx.

A Light Burns

The result:

The placing of a small statue of Our Blessed Virgin next to the convent, where a light burns day and night, symbol of hope and faith and devotion.

Information Center

The result:

The opening of Our Lady of Assumption Information Center at 23rd Street and the Boulevard on Nov. 28, 1953, to help both parish and non-parish members to know religion better.

These—and other accomplishments—followed long hours of study, of pains-taking care, of work and cooperation.

The road was not smooth at times. The obstacles seemed many and difficult.

Yet, the young pastor kept on with his program in the second era of the Assumption history—inspiring the parishioners with his example and his courage, and what he termed his privilege to be of service to God and to them.

The Burning of The Mortgage



CHAPTER XIV

The Burning Of The Mortgage

TO THE WAY

HE lights were dimmed, suddenly.

There was a pause of expectancy in the huge auditorium.

An electric atmosphere.

And silence.

Four men were outlined against the pale light of the street lamp outside as they emerged from the side door. Slowly, carefully, as if following a funeral procession, they walked toward the center of the stage.

The uncertain light did not reveal that the men were in full dress, and were carrying a miniature casket. Nor that the casket was painted white, had a huge lock on it, and four tiny handles.

Amid the Applause

Silently, as if performing a solemn duty, the four men placed the miniature casket in the center of the long table, and bowed.

The mood for the burning ceremonies had been set.

The lights were switched on again.

The Rev. Dominic J. Del Monte stood up.

Smilingly, he acknowledged the greetings of the crowd.

The men slowly removed the lock, and

opened the casket in which the mortgage was encased.

The pastor lit a match, and the mortgage burned "amid the applause of 550 persons" at the Assumption auditorium.

The mortgage burned as the parishioners and guests sang, "We hate to see you go-"

The event marked the end of a \$95,-000 indebtedness on the school and convent of the Assumption parish.

An Everlasting Remembrance

The young pastor beamed!

He spoke briefly and sincerely, thanking the parishioners for their support. He stressed the fact that the \$95,000 represented a great sacrifice on the part of the people, and he invoked God's blessing on their efforts.

"This is a happy and memorable event," he said. "Happy, because your efforts and sacrifices have been realized; memorable, because your work and cooperation have borne fruit.

"May then this day be for all of us an everlasting remembrance."

The event was to be even more "memorable" as the parishioners had a surprise for their young pastor.

The celebration, which was sponsored

by the church societies, was highlighted by the presentation to Father Del Monte of a purchase order for a new automobile, and a check for \$500.

Personal Affection

The themes of those who spoke were admiration for the pastor's achievements in having raised the money in three and a half years, and in paying off the mortgage six months before it was due.

All expressed a "personal affection" for their spiritual leader. At the same time they paid tribute to the first pastor, founder of the Assumption parish.

Then, Rev. F. X. Cevetello, assistant at the Assumption, presented a bouquet of roses to Mrs. Angela Del Monte, mother of the pastor. The Rev. Ferdinando De Padova, also of the Assumption, offered the benediction.

The great day had started at 10 A.M. with a solemn high mass which was celebrated by Father Del Monte.

Greater Service

The Te Deum was sung by the girls' choir under the direction of Sister Margaret, of the Institute Maestre Pie Filippini.

The Jersey Journal reporter who covered the dinner-dance, reported in part:

"More than 500 men and women filled the huge auditorium which had been converted into a dining salon, and heard Mayor Ralph Villani pay tribute to Father Del Monte's achievements in being able to clear up the church's debt in scarce three years, but more important still, attract church goers in greater numbers than ever before and inspire them to render greater service to their Lord God.

"Mayor Villani veritably 'stole the show' when he obliged with a vocal solo in his native Italian in which the assemblage joined.

Joyful Parishioners

"He followed with his address lauding Father Del Monte and saying that the latter was doing such a great work they soon would have him back in Newark.

"There were cries of 'No! No!' from the joyful parishioners who before the evening was over gave substantial evidence of how they revered and loved their pastor when the chairman presented Father Del Monte with an order for an automobile and a purse of \$500."

The pastor's thoughts that night must have gone back to that day in August, 1946, when he first came to the Assumption parish. He was a stranger, then, in a strange city, and had prayed the Blessed Virgin for guidance and for help.

His thoughts must have gone back to the days that followed—days of planning and work, when at times it did not seem possible that much would be accomplished.

This Night

And now this night of January 22, 1950! What a wonderful feeling to know that the school and convent were free of debt. And still more wonderful to know that his people held him in such high esteem and affection.

Outside, the cold wind whipped

against the building. There had been snow earlier in the day.

Inside, there was warmth and friendliness and the sincere desire of the faithful to pay tribute to the young priest who had done so much in such short time.

Father Del Monte was visibly moved.

His Mother

He kept gazing at his mother who sat, proudly, at the table for the honored guests.

His mother—who was also an immigrant—like many of his parishioners. She and they had conquered the strangeness and uncertainty of a new country because here were to be found greater opportunities and a fuller life for their children.

His Father

He went back in memory to his childhood days when his father had been alive. The words he had often used in describing his parent came to mind:

"My father was a wonderful man. He had a philosophy all his own. Although limited in his education, he approached life in a righteous way, guided by a simple philosophy: He always did good."

Like these people here, he thought.

Simple, hard-working, God-fearing people, who learned the hard lessons of life in two continents.

Good people who tried to raise their families to be a credit to their religion and their country.

People of limited means who had helped and supported him generously in his short but fruitful period as their shepherd.

Into Their Hearts

He remembered the beautiful words, "I was a Stranger and ye took Me in."

He, as the representative of Christ, had been a stranger and these men and women had accepted him, taking him into their hearts and their homes.

He looked down at the people who constituted his parish. He prayed that never would he betray their trust, that never would he do less than they expected of him.

He knew then that he and this warmhearted group of people had achieved a partnership that would, in years to come, do much to further the glory of God.



CHAPTER XV

Fifty Years A Parish



E must begin again. This parish must continue to grow."

It was the young pastor speaking to his people.

The occasion:

The observance of the Golden Jubilee of the Assumption Church.

The time: Sunday, January 4, 1953.

Five months before, on the feast of the Assumption, the parish held a three-day festival as a prelude to the Fiftieth Anniversary ceremonies.

There was the block-long street fair with such attraction as children's rides, games of skill, and booths selling tempting edibles.

An all-parish cast presented a series of programs on a platform erected especially for the occasion.

The Festival

Featured were selections by an all-girl choir, trumpet solos, comedy routines, ventriloquism, guitar selections, novelty numbers by the Police Department's Hillbilly Band, a playlet on the life of the Blessed Mother, accordion renditions, selections by an all-male choir, old Italian songs, and other musical selections.

A car awarded by the Assumption CYO remained on display on 23rd Street during the street fair.

Spiritual observances of the festival included processions and a solemn high mass celebrated by Father Del Monte.

The Assumption Band and the men of the parish marched in the procession. The statue of the Blessed Mother was carried through the streets of the city. The Catholic War Veterans, Assumption Post 1612 color guard, altar boys and parish societies participated.

The Building Fund

The solemn benediction followed the procession.

Parish organizations whose members took part in the festival included the Holy Name Society, Catholic War Veteran Post No. 1612, and its Ladies' Auxiliary, the Parent-Teachers Association, the St. Ann's Society, the Catholic Youth Organization, the Children of Mary, the Sacred Heart Society, the Rosary Society, the St. Gabriel Society, the St. Anthony Society, the St. Michael Society, the St. John Cammarata Society, the United As-Societies, the Assumption sumption Women, Assumption Men and Women, the Societa' Del Crocifisso, the Cana Club, the Societa' Maria SS. Delle Grazie, The Assumption Boy Scout Troop No. 27 and the Assumption Girl Scout Troop No. 20.

Proceeds from all booths and events of the three-day fair of Madonna dell'Assunta, patron of the church, were contributed to the building fund.

The actual Fiftieth Anniversary date was December 20, 1952, but the observance was set for January 4, 1953.

Free of Debt

A mass of Thanksgiving officially opened the golden anniversary celebration.

The mass was followed by a dinner for religious and civic dignitaries in the parish hall. A dinner for parishioners was held in the evening.

The day preceding the big event a newspaper account disclosed:

"The present physical plant, free of debt and consisting of a church, convent, rectory, and school, is a far cry from the small hall on West 21st Street.

Building Site

"At the start, when only 500 parishioners constituted the entire congregation in a converted store, the Rt. Rev. Michael Mercolino, first pastor, received a plot of ground on West 23rd Street as a gift. He began construction of a church building on that site and the parish began to grow to its present size.

"Today's congregation, 50 years later, consists of 2,600 families and 13,000 parishioners.

"Monsignor Mercolino continued as the spiritual leader until his death in 1945. He lived to construct all the buildings now owned by the parish.

"When the Rev. Dominic Del Monte

assumed the pastorate in 1946, he also undertook the responsibility of clearing off a debt of \$93,000 incurred in construction of the school and convent.

Ordained From the Parish

"Father Del Monte proceeded to erase the financial liabilities of the church in three years and now plans to construct an addition to the school building.

"Plans for tomorrow's celebration were prepared by a large committee headed by Father Del Monte. The officers of the mass will be former parishioners who have been ordained to the priesthood.

"The Rev. Joseph Lupo, O.SS.T., stationed at Pikesville, Md., will be the celebrant. He will be assisted by the Rev. Frank Di Giorgio of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Newark, as deacon, and the Rev. Louis Vitali of Holy Rosary, Jersey City, subdeacon. Master of Ceremonies will be the Rev. Dennis Mc-Kenna, a curate of Our Lady of the Assumption. Father Del Monte will be an assisting priest.

The Sermon

"The sermon will be preached by the Rev. Leo Martin, chaplain of Holy Name Hospital, Teaneck, a former resident of Bayonne.

"Bishop McNulty's deacons of honor will be Msgr. Ernest Monteleone, pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Jersey City, and Msgr. John J. Shanley, superintendent of Associated Catholic Charities and Institutions of the Diocese of Paterson.

"Minor ministers of the mass will be three parishioners who are now studying for the priesthood at Immaculate Conception Seminary, Darlington. They are Joseph Affanoso and John Vaccaro, acolytes, and Joseph Vaccaro, thurifer.

"Dinner will be served in the parish hall after the mass for the clergy, sisters and guests.

"The celebration will be completed in the evening with another dinner for the parishioners, the clergy and friends of the parish."

The Apostolic Blessing

The high point in the day of prayer and feasting was the paternal, apostolic blessing of His Holiness Pope Pius XII.

The Papal benediction was delivered by Auxiliary Bishop James J. McNulty at the Mass of Thanksgiving. The Vatican message was also read at the evening dinner.

It said:

"Through Bishop McNulty occasion 50th anniversary foundation Our Lady of Assumption Parish, Bayonne, N. J., His Holiness cordially imparts Father Del Monte, clergy, religious, laity, parish, Paternal Apostolic Blessing implored."

The newspaper account of that joyous occasion read in part:

"Father Del Monte, describing the first 50 years as the first book in the church's history, said that the second epoch was now beginning.

Better Citizens

"Citing Monsignor Mercolino as 'the founder who must be happy tonight,' Father Del Monte told his flock that we must begin again. The parish must continue to grow.

"Father Del Monte was given a standing ovation by the throng of 500 persons attending the evening affair.

"The priest was lauded by speaker after speaker who praised the spiritual leader as the servant of God using the philosophy that better parishioners make better citizens."

Said Mayor Edward F. Clark, who represented the city at the affair:

"I know that it is not easy going for your pastor. If you help him the same way you have done in the past, you will build a monument for as long as your pastor lives, for as long as you all live—and you will be highly proud."

His Family

Mrs. Angela Del Monte, 67 year-old mother of the pastor, and his sisters and brothers-in-law were honored guests.

Mrs. Del Monte was presented with an orchid corsage by Miss Aileen Flynn, who taught Sunday School and catechism at the Assumption Church for 47 years. That was to mark the last public appearance of the pastor's mother. A short time later, she went to her reward.

One of the treats of the evening was the two operatic arias sung by Elvira Del Monte, sister of the pastor, formerly of the Boston Opera Company.

"Services at the morning mass were colorful and dramatic," said a reporter present at the ceremonies.

"When Bishop McNulty entered the church, a choir of 35 girls, led by Sister

Margaret, M.P.F., sang "Tu Es Sacerdos."

Reflects Creation

"Father Cevetello led the 20-voice men's choir, and the combined groups when they sang the mass from Refice. The progress of the mass was sung by the men's group."

Rev. Martin, who delivered the sermon, said:

"Within the 50-year span of its life the parish reflects creation as did Moses in Genesis; it epitomizes redemption as did the four evangelists; it bears testimony to the beneficence of the long history of the Catholic Church.

"With the death of Monsignor Mercolino, the priest dies, but the priesthood lived on in his apostolic successor, Father Del Monte.

"Guard this heritage jealously, treasure it faithfully; and pass it on in all its pristine glory to generations yet unborn."

The First Book

On January 4, 1953, "the first book in the church's history" was completed.

There were those who knew every page in that book by heart. There were those who remembered every event listed because those events were part of their youth, early manhood, maturity, and declining years.

It was a night for reminiscing, for looking back. Back to that first Mass in the little store, to the small wooden church,

to the days of the horse and buggy, scratchy victrolas, cobblestone roads, and trolley cars. Back to the good old days.

Old timers spent a great part of that Golden Jubilee evening regaling the younger generation with stories of the past glories of their church and their town.

The first book of the church's history! Church, school and convent—free of debt.

All property in good order!

Let the first book be read with pride, and treasured through the years.

The Second Book

Let the second book be made ready.

The priesthood lives on. . . .

It was a night for looking back at past glories. But, it was a night, too, for looking forward.

The second book of the church's history was open at the first page. The second book was waiting to be written.

"We must begin again. This parish must continue to grow."

It was the young pastor speaking to his people.

And his people listened.

Old, middle-aged, young—turned to their shepherd.

The priesthood lives on in the person of the Reverend Dominic J. Del Monte, second pastor of the 50-year-old Parish of the Assumption.

"The old order changeth yielding place to new and God fulfills Himself in many ways. . . ."

"We Must Continue To Grow"



CHAPTER XVI

"We Must Continue To Grow"

HE theme of the Fiftieth Anniversary celebration provided the spark for the intensive work of the days that followed.

Just as the small wooden church had once proved inadequate for the needs of the parishioners, so, now, was the present school taxed beyond its capacity.

The pastor told his people:

"The number of classrooms available in our present school is inadequate to care for the educational training of our youngsters. Facilities for social activities of our other parishioners are taxed with a consequent inconvenience for all.

"The sacrifice of providing ourselves with larger school quarters and auditorium facilities must be ours.

Minimum Goal

"In order to begin construction, we must have on hand one-half the total building costs of \$500,000.

"Through your past generosity our former debt has been cleared, and we now have on hand \$90,000.

"To provide the additional monies needed quickly, we are undertaking a major building fund campaign for a minimum goal of \$150,000.

"The successful realization of our goal will provide half the amount needed, and permit us to borrow the remainder through Diocesan channels."

Naming of the Classrooms

The site selected is between the present school and convent at 23rd Street near the Boulevard.

Eight additional classrooms with the most modern conveniences, placing special emphasis on safeguarding the health of the parish children, will accommodate 500 pupils.

The classrooms will be named for St. Anne, St. Lucy Filippini, St. Anthony, St. Dominic, St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, St. Maria Goretti, St. Joseph, and the Sacred Heart.

There will be meeting rooms for parish clubs, teams and societies, a special conference room dedicated in honor of St. Therese of The Little Flower, and a Parent-Teachers room in honor of St. Bernadette.

A modern library for reading, study, and research, will be under the patronage of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Guardian Angel

A kindergarten and play area for the

children who must use the present rectory, will have a statue of the Guardian Angel at the entrance.

A cafeteria dedicated to St. Catherine of Siena will feature a spacious kitchen of the latest design.

An auditorium gymnasium will be designed to accommodate crowds for basketball games and other athletic competitions.

The auditorium will include four bowling alleys, two locker rooms, gym equipment and trophy cases.

This was the detailed plan of the pastor.

This was the goal of the fund-raising committee.

Volunteer Workers

The enthusiasm of the volunteer workers and the advance memorial gifts committee was evident even before the formal intensive drive for \$150,000 began.

The pastor told his people:

"The response to our appeal for funds for this once-in-a-lifetime event will be great indeed if the zeal of the workers is any criterion.

"Their help in this vital cause is of tremendous assurance to me."

The drive was officially launched during special church services.

The Pastor's Blessing

The local newspaper reported:

"More than 100 volunteers who will work in teams of 10 with a captain in charge, were individually blessed by Rev. Dominic J. Del Monte, pastor, following

benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and special prayers for a successful campaign.

"In his talk to the workers, Father Del Monte said that it is encouraging to note that more than \$24,000 has been made in cash and memorial pledges even before the campaign is opened."

With the zeal of missionaries, the volunteers visited the homes of every Italian family in the city, explaining the needs of the school.

Memorial Gifts

They offered the parishioners an opportunity to reserve memorials in the building to honor their families or the memory of deceased relatives, and those sons who gave their lives in World War II and the Korean War.

The carefully-drawn plans, designed by Frank J. Ricker and Louis A. Axt, architects, were subject to approval by the Archdiocese of Newark.

The cornerstone laying ceremony for the school addition was to be another glorious chapter in the magnificent history of the Assumption parish.

Our Faith

Father Del Monte said:

"Holy Mother Church depends upon the Catholic parish school as her best means of helping to foster, preserve, and safeguard our faith."

It would be well if it could be said that the drive went smoothly, that the monies poured in on schedule, that there was nothing for the pastor and his hardworking committee to do but to fold their hands and wait for the cornerstone to be laid.

But this is no Hollywood saga. This is a setting down of facts, not fiction. The work of God is not easily done in this world.

There were times when the pastor wondered if the goal would ever be reached. There were nights when the foot-sore and heart-sore committee members and fund raisers met with the pastor to review the results. Each one tried to keep from the others how beset with doubts he was.

All Things are Possible

After they left, the young pastor would pray fervently. Whenever he awoke from fitful sleep, he would find the consoling words of St. Paul on his lips:

"I can do all things in Him Who strengthens me."

The committee members would take courage when they recalled the special blessing received from the pastor at the start of the campaign. They would know that somewhere in the future lay success, however sorely attained.

But the dark days were to be quickly forgotten as soon as the work began to show concrete results.

Project Assured

By mid-July of 1953, the project was practically assured.

On the day that Father Del Monte

took the plans to the diocesan office for approval, his heart was filled with thanks to the men and women who had been closely associated with him during the drive.

He would never cease to be grateful to those mostly unsung heroes who gave unstintingly of their time to do God's work.

He knew them to be the warp and woof of the parish pattern. Their names would not be long remembered except by him. He hoped they would find satisfaction in the knowledge of work well done for the Lord.

All of them would have a place on his own private honor roll. Though the list would never be published, it would be read and honored by Him Who knows and sees all.

Second Pastor

He murmured a prayer for all those who had in any way contributed to the success of the drive either spiritually or materially.

He thought with warmth of all the people who comprised his parish. It was with them in mind that he placed the plans in the hands of the proper officials.

Father Dominic J. Del Monte returned home with the necessary approval for the first major building project he had assumed since his assignment as the second pastor of Our Lady of Assumption Roman Catholic Church of Bayonne, New Jersey.



CHAPTER XVII

The Priesthood Lives On...



HE cornerstone for the school addition was to be laid with colorful and impressive ceremonies.

The school structure was to be built according to plan. . . .

... But that story is for some later historian to record—the one who will be called upon to complete the second book of the History of the Assumption Parish.

It is for us, now, to concern ourselves with the nature of the man who has been the dominant figure in the history of the parish these past seven years, and who will continue to be so, for as long as God shall spare him to his people.

The Priest-Man

It is for us to concern ourselves with the priest-man, Father Dominic J. Del Monte, beloved pastor of Our Lady of the Assumption Church.

It is a fairly simple task for the historian to look dispassionately upon the past and see it for what it was. Living, pulsating history is more difficult to interpret.

In the same way, one may review a man's life from birth to death and say: There was a great man!

It is much more difficult to evaluate a man who is still a part of the contemporary scene.

By Their Fruits

However, there is one yardstick that comes nearer to measuring a man justly than any other. In the words of Christ:

"By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. . . ."

From the day of his arrival in Bayonne, Father Del Monte has worked zealously to further the Kingdom of God.

He has been a Father in the true sense of the word.

He has been catholic in the full meaning of the term.

He has been protector and guide to all, regardless of race, color, or creed.

Confidence and Love

As the days of his pastorship grew into weeks and then months, the parishioners learned to follow their spiritual leader with increased confidence and love.

The bond between them strengthened with the passing of time. He was truly a father, sharing the sorrows of his children, rejoicing in their good fortune.

No one was more proud than he of the large number of his people who had achieved success in the arts, in letters, in the business world.

Gradually, the entire community became conscious of the young priest with the soft voice, ready smile, and quick, purposeful movements.

Eloquent Testimony

Words of appreciation and tokens of recognition were tendered by his own flock and by grateful citizens of other faiths and other races.

The gifts of the church societies were eloquent testimony of the esteem in which the spiritual leader was held by his followers.

The honors bestowed by a grateful city were an indication that the world is never too rushed to pause in tribute to a deserving citizen.

Mostly, the work of Father Del Monte was for youth.

The Young People

He emphasized:

"My primary concern is with the young people of the parish."

To that end, he sponsored the formation of several church organizations concerned with youth.

"From the very beginning, the vibrant vitality of Father Del Monte was felt," wrote Facts, the Bayonne weekly newspaper.

"He called together the younger element in the parish and began to organize the fundamental basis for an organization that four years later would place his parish among the leaders in curbing juvenile delinquency in our community.

"He set up a sports program, which included bowling, basketball, fencing, baseball, boxing. He inaugurated a series of dances which were open to the City of Bayonne."

Parent-Teacher Association

The pastor was acclaimed:

By the Assumption Parent-Teacher Association on the twentieth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. He was the guest of honor at a special assembly program of school children who entertained with skits and songs both in the English and the Italian languages. On that occasion, he was presented with gifts and flowers by the PTA and other church societies.

Catholic War Veterans

The pastor was acclaimed:

By the Hudson County Chapter, Catholic War Veterans of New Jersey, for his work and interest in veterans' affairs. He was given a certificate of merit which stated that the "work of persons such as the pastor should not go without recognition from the Catholic War Veterans."

The Rotary Club

The pastor was acclaimed:

By the Bayonne Rotary Club with the presentation of the Rotary Youth Service plaque "for an outstanding job for the youth of the city, organizing many sports teams and recreation programs for

both boys and girls regardless of color or creed."

B'nai B'rith

The pastor was acclaimed:

By Bayonne Lodge No. 1550, B'nai B'rith, and received from that group the fifth annual brotherhood award at ceremonies held at the Uptown Jewish Community Center. He was presented with "a distinguished service citation for his work on behalf of racial and religious relations during the past year."

Civil Air Patrol

The pastor was acclaimed:

By the Civil Air Patrol, auxiliary of the United States Air Force, and named a Lieutenant Chaplain to render spiritual aid in the event of local or national emergency.

Presented with a Portrait

The pastor was acclaimed:

By the Assumption Memorial Post 1612, Catholic War Veterans, with the presentation of a large oil portrait of himself at the dinner-dance marking the Fifth Anniversary of the post. The portrait, which came as a surprise to the pastor, was the special work of John A. Mengo, past commander.

A long list of honors for so young a man!

Not for Myself

Many fruitful years still lie ahead for Father Del Monte who said recently:

"With God's help, I will work harder

and better, not for myself, but for the good and welfare of the people of Bayonne, particularly the children of the city who need guidance and help, now more than ever."

Who knows to what heights the parish will rise under such zealous leadership?

It is said that the dream of every young priest is to build a magnificent church to his God.

The first book in the Assumption history records the erection of two houses of worship.

It May Be

It may be the growth of the parish will create the need for a third, larger, beautiful church—another testimonial of the love of the Italian people for their God.

It may be . . .

... But some other historian must set down the happenings of the future.

His Credo

It is enough for us to say that we can conceive of no obstacle that will long deter a man who has as his credo the words of St. Paul:

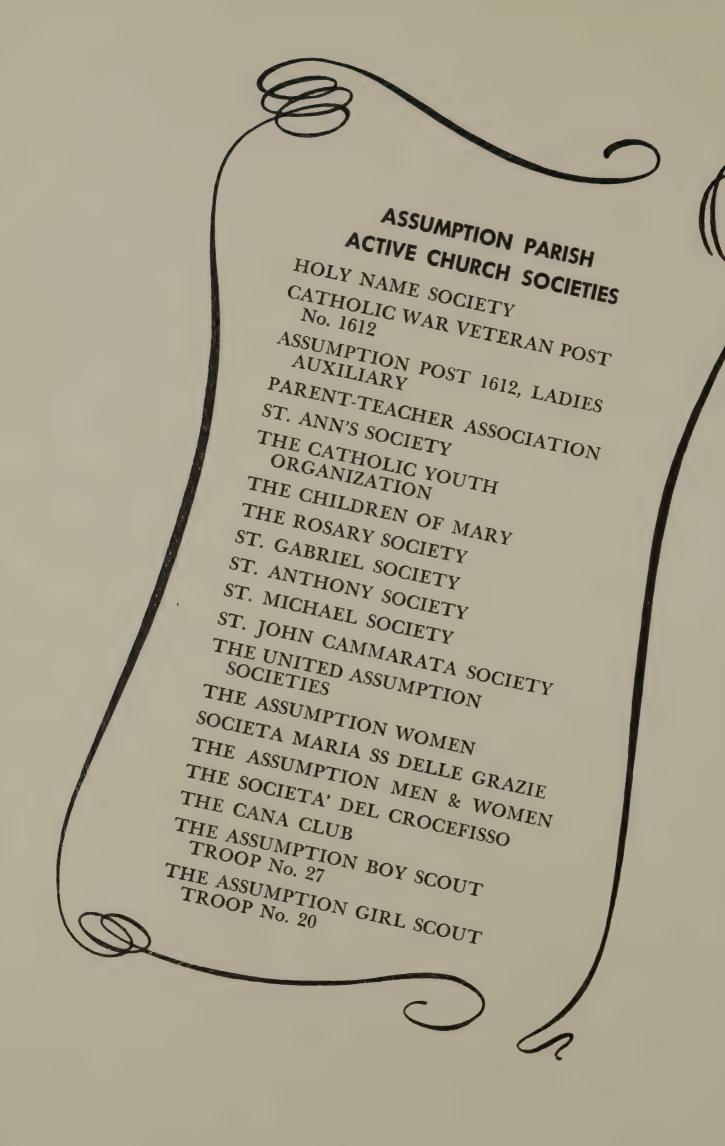
"I can do all things in Him Who strengthens me."

All things are possible to a priest who is steadfastly on the side of God. All things—even the impossible.

The priesthood lives on in the person of Father Dominic J. Del Monte.

The priesthood lives on. . . .

THE END



They Served Our Parish

Assistant Priests

REV. B. CIARAMELLA

REV. LOUIS SCARANO

REV. E. STABILE

REV. VINCENZO ARIENZO

REV. B. BARRETTA

REV. LA BELLA

REV. JOSEPH DELLA PIETRA

REV. A. VISCONTI

REV. ACHILLE PETRONE

REV. CARLO MAFFEI

REV. J. BATTISTA BRUNO

REV. ETTORE PELLICCIA

REV. G. TASSONE

REV. A. BANARDO

REV. G. GILBERT

REV. P. MAZZOCCA

REV. N. MONGIELLO

REV. PETER PARIS

Rev. G. Casella

REV. MATTEO DI IORIO

REV. R. MAGGIORE

REV. G. CARDONE

REV. ERCOLE DI PRIMIS

REV. FELIX PERLO

REV. LOUIS CONTI

REV. F. MIGLIANO

REV. ANTHONY KELLY

REV. MICHAEL CALABRESE

REV. FERDINAND DE PADOVA

REV. DENNIS MCKENNA

REV. JOSEPH CEVETELLO

REV. SYLVESTER LIVOLSI

Religious Teachers Filippini

Superiors

SISTER INES FOSCHI SISTER VIRGINIA BELLEGIA SISTER EDVIGE DE CURTIS

Sisters Who Have Taught in Our Lady of Assumption School

SISTER TERESA COSTANTINI

SISTER ADALGISA MANONE

SISTER ERNESTINA ARCANGELI

SISTER JUDITH SERRA

SISTER BEATRICE PACE

SISTER ANGELINA DAL CORSO

SISTER DOLORES TOSCANO

SISTER MARGHERITA MANGIERI

SISTER MARY MEGARO

SISTER ANNA PAMPEI

SISTER ERMA PAPALEO

SISTER ANNA MAIORANO

SISTER CONCETTA UMUSELLA

SISTER MARY GERGTHY

SISTER AGNES DI PASQUALE

SISTER ROSE FERRETO

SISTER JOSEPHINE VALENTI

SISTER MARTHA FALCONE

SISTER TERESA CRUDELE

SISTER ALMERINA VISCELLI SISTER RITA FLORIO

SISTER MARY PALANCE

SISTER VIVIAN MICELI

SISTER MARIE ROCCAPRIORI

Sister Angelina Festa

SISTER ROSE MARY CUCARELLI SISTER CARMELA LASALANDRA

SISTER DORIS RACHANSKI

SISTER JOSEPHINE MIGNOGNA

SISTER ERSILIA ROSETTI

SISTER MARY SANTORI

Milestones In The History Of The Assumption Parish

June 3, 1902—Monsignor Mercolino celebrated first Mass in Bayonne in rented store on West 21st Street.

DECEMBER 2, 1902—Dedication of the first church of the Assumption.

June 11, 1911-Cornerstone laying for the present church at 23rd Street.

August 15, 1915—Dedication of the present church.

May 30, 1918—Blessing of the Paintings. Observance of the 25th anniversary of Monsignor Mercolino's ordination to the priesthood.

Dedication of new main altar. First demonstration of new electric system in the church grounds.

April 3, 1939—Palm Sunday ceremonies for cornerstone laying of parochial school and Convent.

DECEMBER 2, 1939—Dedication ceremonies of the two new buildings.

Остовек 24, 1945—Monsignor Mercolino died at the age of 75.

August 1, 1946—Father Del Monte assigned as second pastor of the Assumption Church.

JANUARY 22, 1950—The burning of the church mortgage marking the end of a \$95,-000 indebtedness on the school and convent.

January 4, 1953—Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of The Assumption Church.

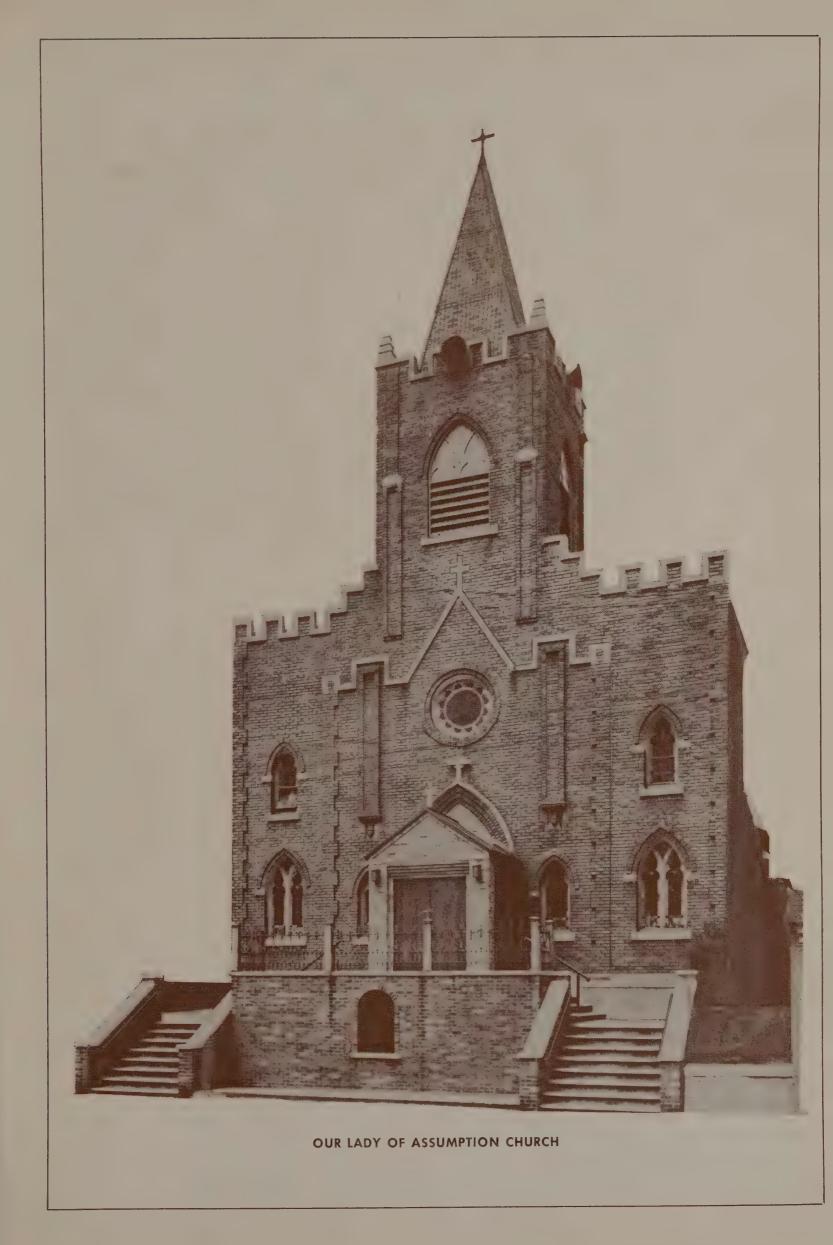
June 1, 1953—The beginning of a formal, intensive drive for \$150,000 for an addition to the school building.

The
Story of a Parish
In Pictures

Cy



THE ASSUMPTION





THE SCHOOL

and

THE CONVENT

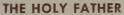


Copy of Telegram sent by His Excellency Most Reverend James A. McNulty petitioning the Papal Blessing on the Assumption Fiftieth Anniversary celebrations.

MONSIGNOR MONTINI VATICAN CITY

PRAYING HOLY FATHER'S BLESSING FOR REV DOMINIC J DEL MONTE PASTOR OUR LADY OF THE ASSUMPTION CHURCH BAYONNE NEW JERSEY AND FOR CLERGY RELIGIOUS SISTERS AND FAITHFUL MEN WOMEN AND CHILDREN - OCCASION FIFTIETH ANNI-VERSARY FOUNDATION OF PARISH

> BISHOP MCNULTY NEWARK





HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS XII

BISHOP MCNULTY NEWARK NEW JERSEY

HIS HOLINESS CORDIALLY IMPARTS FATHER DEL MONTE CLERGY RELIGIOUS LAITY PARISH PATERNAL APOSTOLIC BLESSING IMPLORED MONTINI PROSECRETARY



His Excellency
The Most Reverend
THOMAS A. BOLAND, S.T.D., LL.D.

Archbishop of Newark

The late Most Reverend THOMAS J. WALSH Archbishop of Newark



OUR PASTOR



Rev. Dominic J. Del Monte

Rev. Dominic J. Del Monte

THE REV. DOMINIC J. DEL MONTE was born in Newark, on July 30, 1903, the son of Paul and Angela Del Monte. He received his early education at St. Joseph's Parochial School in Newark, and was valedictorian of his graduating class.

Inflamed with the desire of doing missionary work, Father Del Monte attended Seton Hall Preparatory School in South Orange, with the intention of one day entering the Jesuit Society. But God, in His divine plans, decided otherwise, so Father Del Monte continued to study for the priesthood.

In his four years of High School, Father Del Monte took part in social and athletic activities. Upon completion of High School, he continued at Seton Hall College, graduating with the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

He was admitted to the Immaculate Conception Seminary in Darlington in September, 1928. Two years later, he received his Master of Arts degree.

Upon completion of the theological studies, his dream was finally realized and he was ordained to the priesthood May 21, 1932, by the late Archbishop Thomas J. Walsh, in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Newark.

His first assignment was at Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Jersey City, where he remained for one year, and he was then transferred to St. Michael's parish, Paterson, where he served until 1935.

Next, Father Del Monte was sent to Our Lady of Libera Church in West New York, where he remained for seven years. On September 15, 1942, he was transferred to St. Anthony's Church, East Newark.

Here again his indefatigable and untiring zeal was once more shown by the results of his work. Father Del Monte was also honored by being appointed Fire Chaplain of the East Newark Fire Department, and Senior Lieutenant Chaplain of the Naval Cadets of the West Hudson Area.

Four years later, on August 1, 1946, Father Del Monte was promoted as Pastor of Our Lady of Assumption Church in Bayonne, where he is presently continuing his work in the service of God and for the spiritual welfare of his parishioners.



Late Rt. Rev. Msgr. Michael J. Mercolino

Monsignor Michael T. Mercolino, founder of Our Lady of Assumption Church in Bayonne, was born in Lauro, Italy, on January 12, 1870, the son of the late Pasquale and Carmella Mercolino.

His earliest wish was to become a priest, and after years of study, he was graduated from the Seminary of Nola, Province of Avellino, Italy.

It was necessary for the ordaining bishop to obtain a papal dispensation before the young scholastic could take his final vows because he lacked seven months of the required age. This difficulty was surmounted, and he received orders from Aniello Renzullo, the Bishop of Nola, on May 27, 1893.

After his ordination, Monsignor Mercolino was appointed chaplain to Prince Massima Lanelotti in the convent of the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paola, where he served until 1900. At that time, he travelled to America for a six-month vacation in Peekskill, New York.

While here, he assisted the aged pastor of a small church in an East Side Italian colony of Manhattan, and a short time later, went to a tiny parish in Silver Lake, New Jersey. Then came a request from the Most Rev. John J. O'Connor, Bishop of Newark, that brought the young priest to Bayonne in the winter of 1901. On May 10, 1941, he was invested as a domestic prelate by Archbishop Thomas J. Walsh.

On May 24, 1943, nearly 60 bishops, monsignori and priests, led by Archbishop Walsh, paid tribute to Monsignor Mercolino on the Fiftieth Anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

Monsignor Mercolino died October 24, 1945, at the age of 75.



This picture was taken when the Assumption Parish was first organized.



Two Bishops share the spotlight in these scenes depicting various events in the life of the Assumption Parish:

BISHOP JAMES A. McNULTY and BISHOP FULTON SHEEN











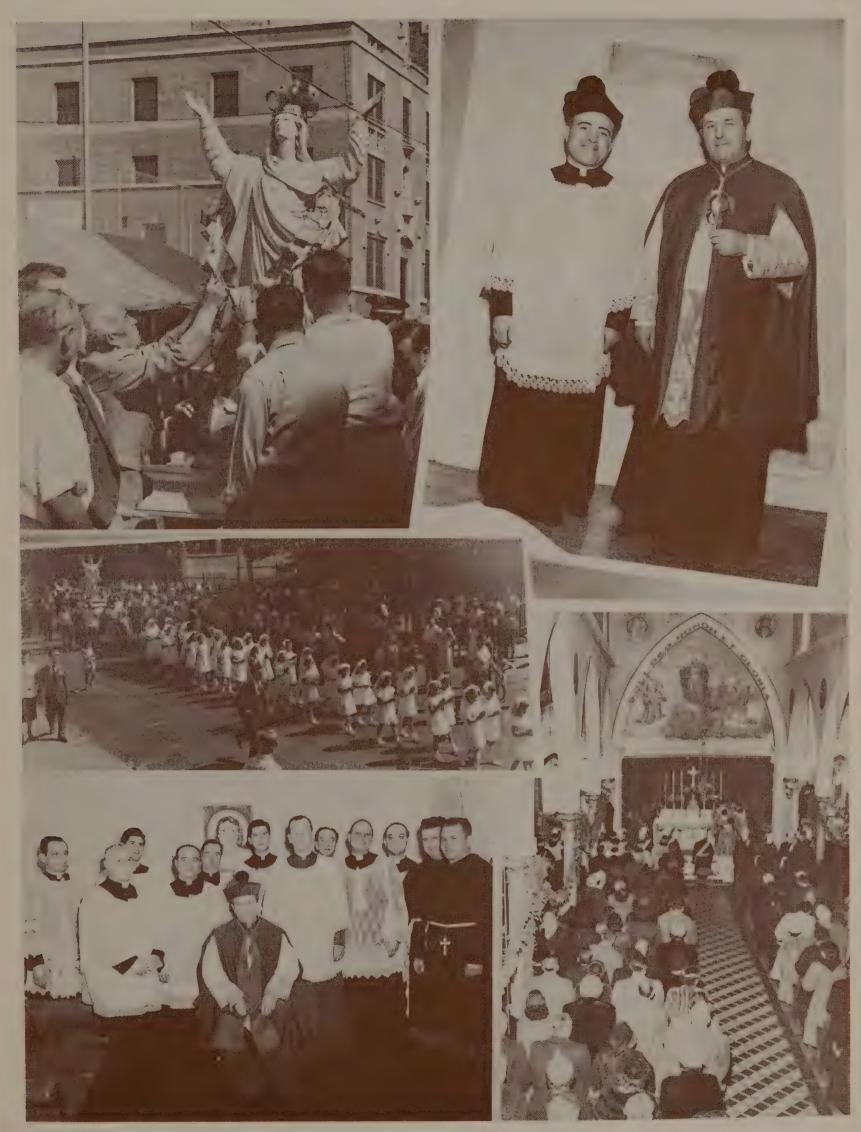








OUR SCHOOL CHILDREN



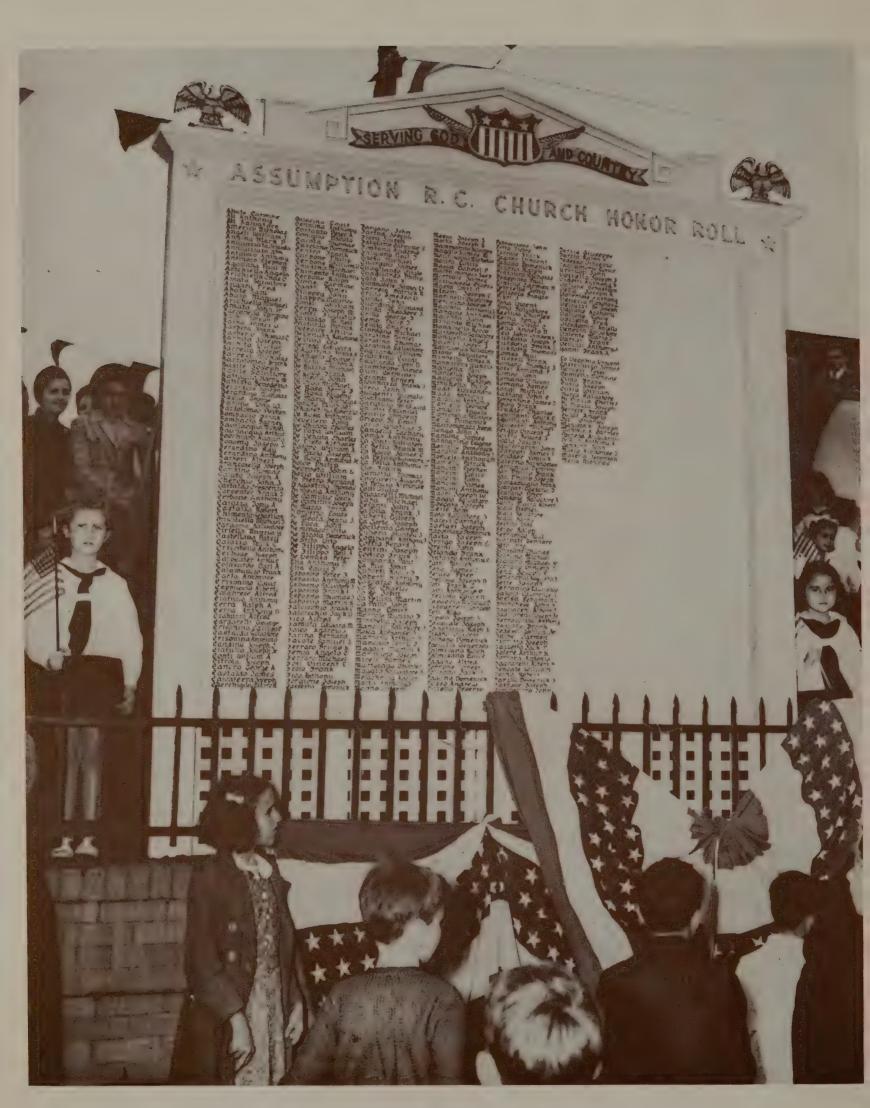
SCENES OF MEMORABLE EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE PARISH



ACTIVITIES OF THE ASSUMPTION SCHOOL Scenery and casts of different plays produced by the school children.



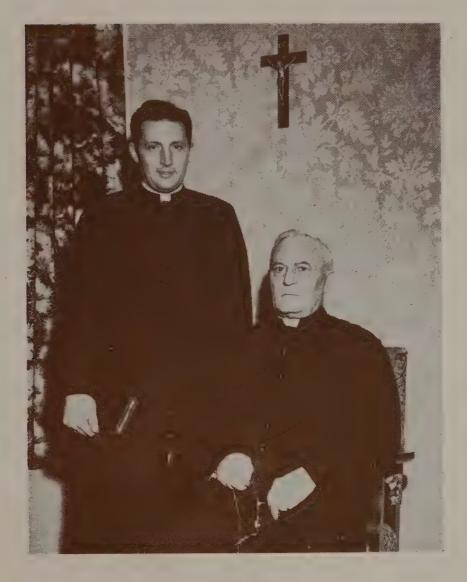
RELIGIOUS SPORTS . . . VETERANS



SERVING GOD AND COUNTRY

Members of the Assumption Parish who fought in World War II.

Assumption Curates



Standing—Rev. Sylvester Livolsi Seated—Rev. Ferdinand Di Padova

"We extend our deep appreciation to the priests who served the Assumption parish so well, from its inception to the present time.

"Their unselfish devotion and efforts have contributed immeasurably to the spiritual welfare of our people." REV. DOMINIC J. DEL MONTE



MAESTRE PIE FILIPPINI

"We owe an everlasting debt of gratitude to the Maestre Pie Filippini. Their teaching and personal interest on behalf of our children are an inspiration to all of us."—Rev. Dominic J. Del Monte.



THE PASTOR AND HIS FAMILY



HONORS FOR THE YOUNG PASTOR



Commemorating ...

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Assumption, Bayonne, New Jersey. The author of this
book, Alfred Ciaburri, a member of the
Assumption parish, is a veteran Jersey Journal reporter who has won county, state and national prizes for newspaper stories. The art work was done by Frederick A. Ryan, a noted artist whose paintings are in the Academy of Arts in Newark. Composition and special typesetting effects are by Charles F. Fiumefreddo, also a parishioner, well-known for his civic activities. To the author and to those who assisted him—whose sole reward was the fervent thanks of this church — my personal blessings and gratitude.

A STATE OF THE STA

REV. DOMINIC J. DEL MONTE
Pastor

